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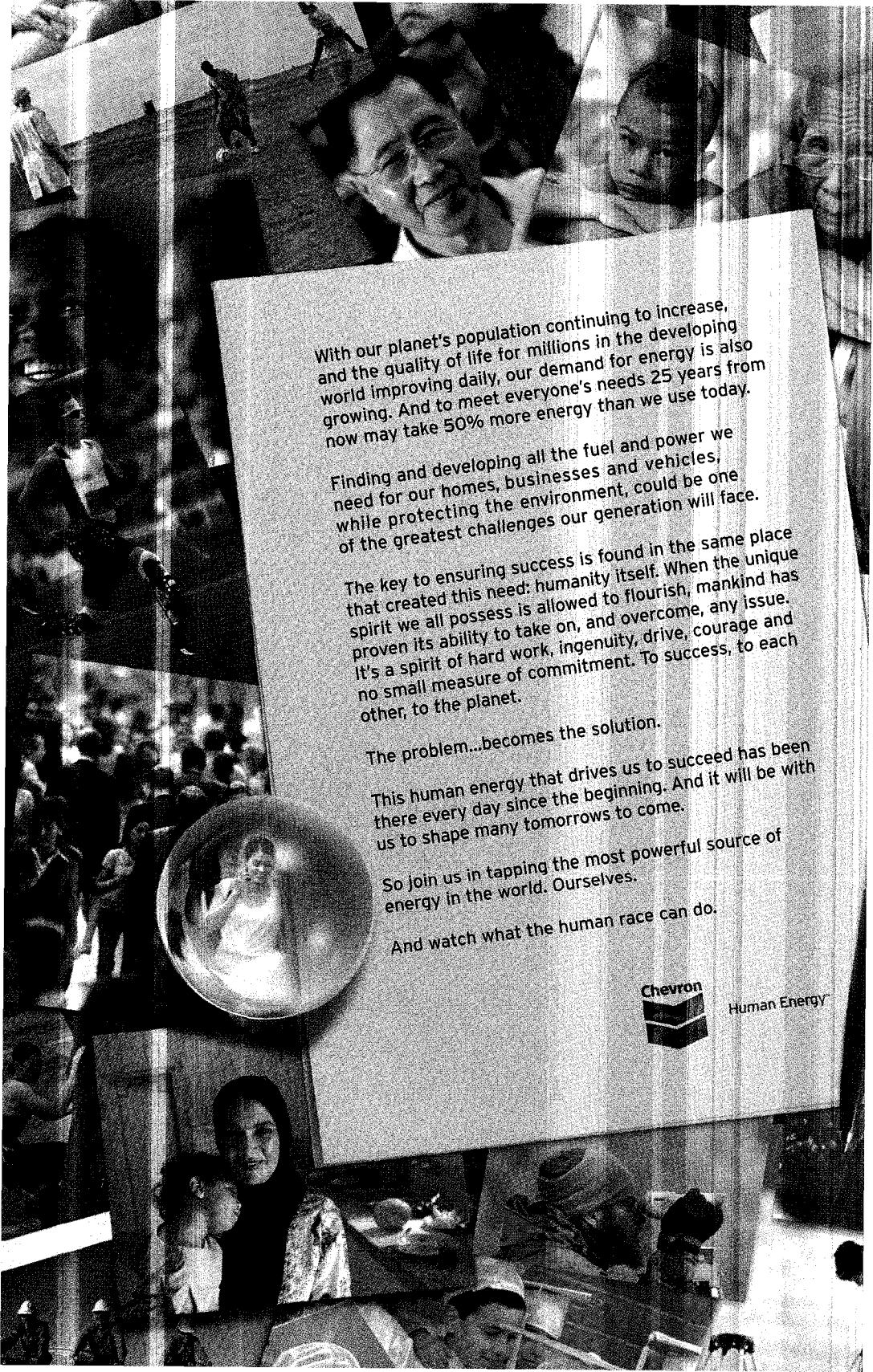
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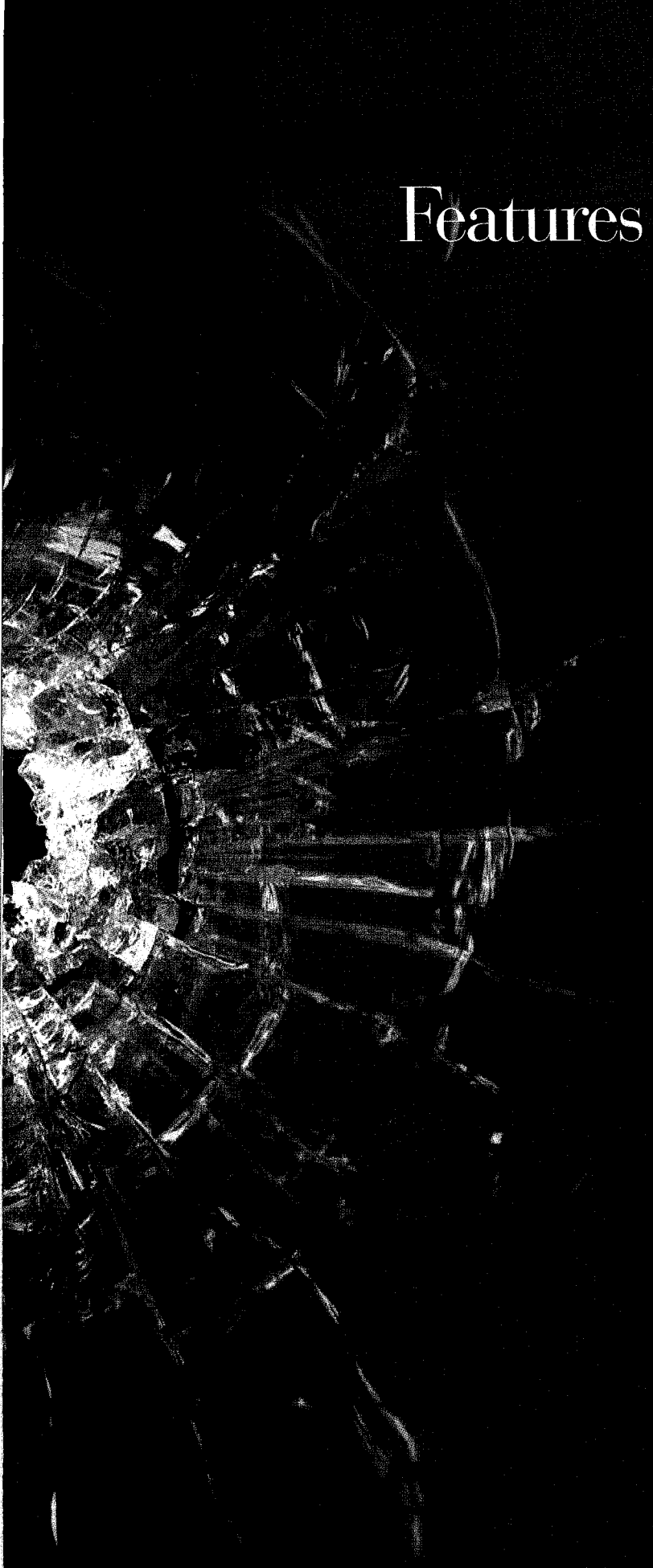
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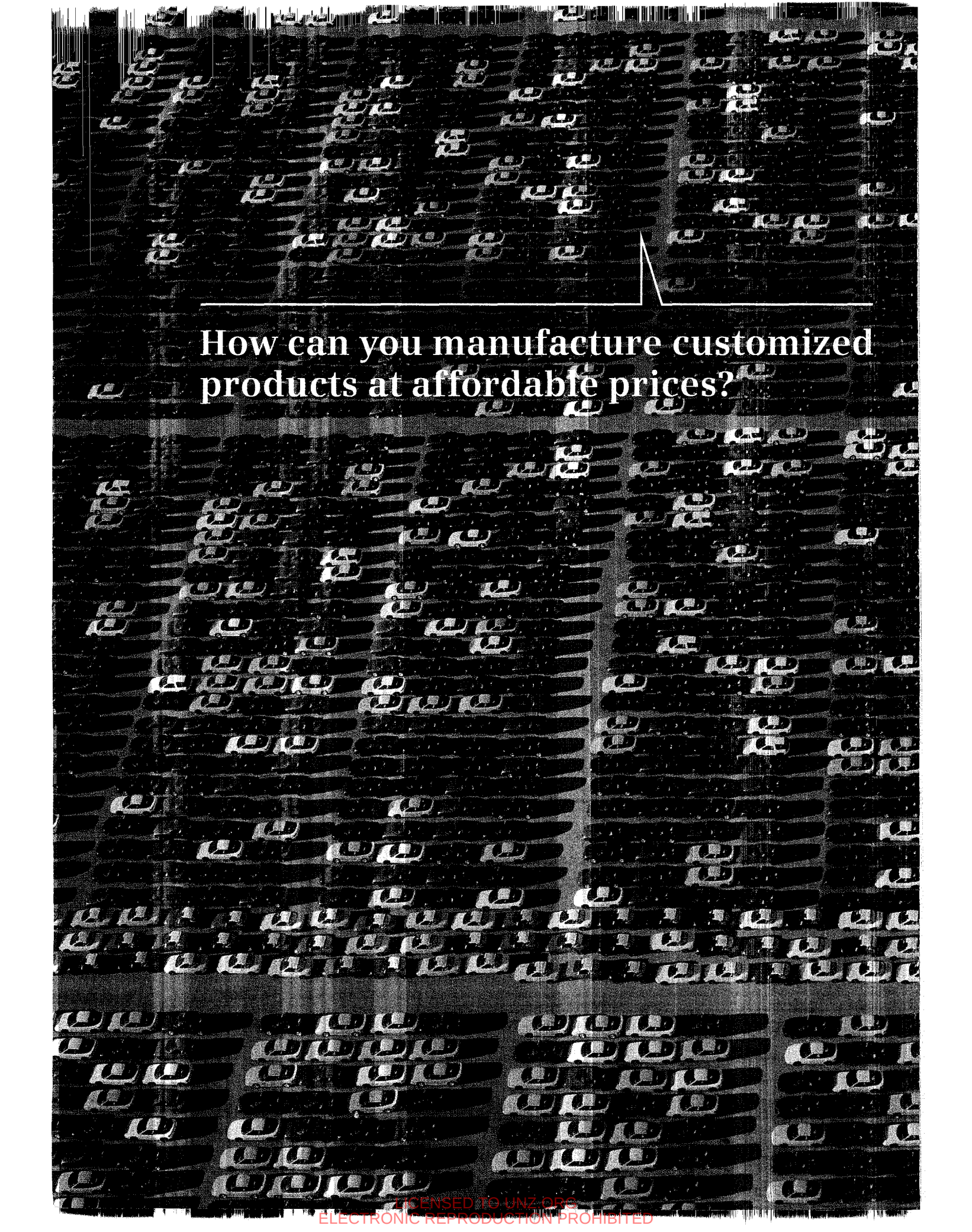
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by *Mark Bowden*



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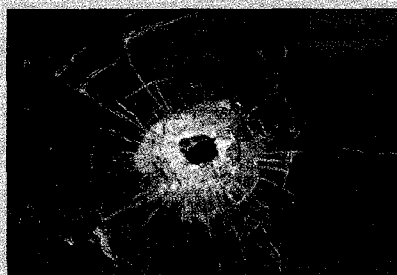
Answers for industry.

SIEMENS

The Issue in Brief

THE **Atlantic**

JULY/AUGUST 2008 | VOLUME 302 | NUMBER 1



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PHOTO BY RON SACHS/CNFF/CORBIS

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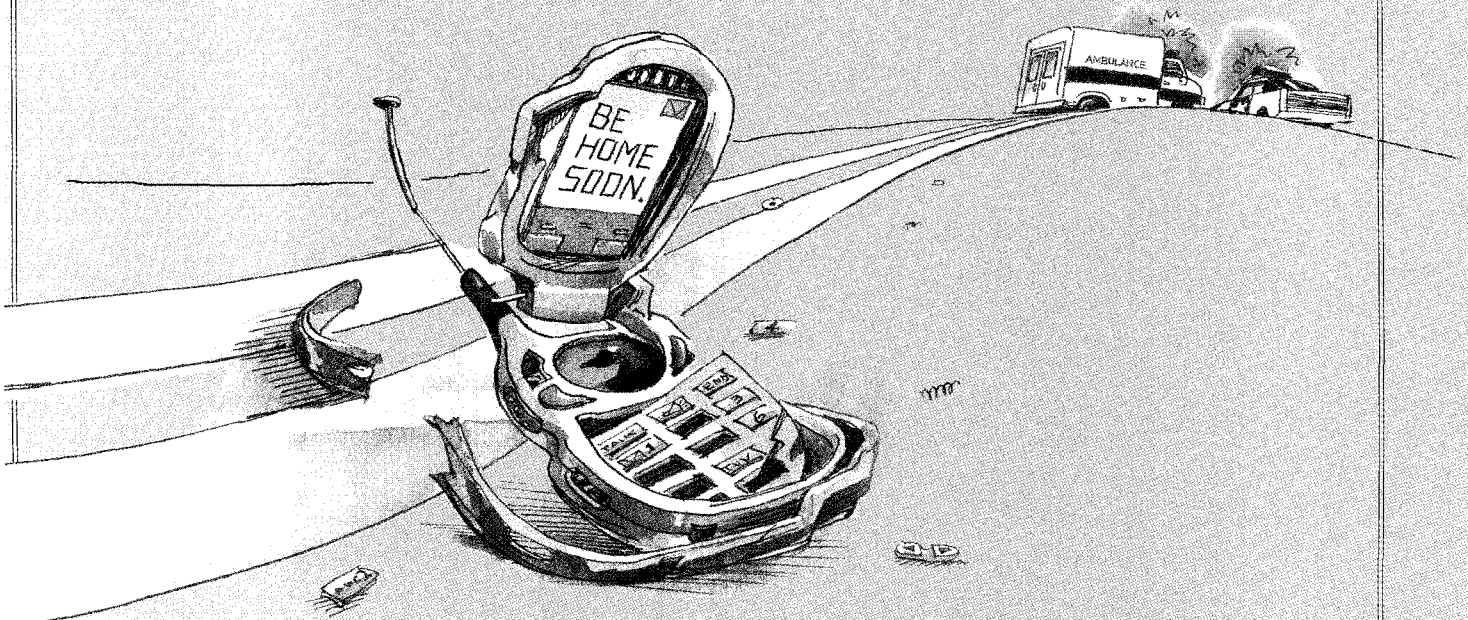
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Nearly one third of teens admit to texting while driving.



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GDL laws put limitations on teen driving so kids can gain experience safely. Since North Carolina

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

JULY/AUGUST 2008 THE ATLANTIC



A JEWISH DEMOCRACY

Both the dilemma Jeffrey Goldberg delineates (“Unforgiven,” *May Atlantic*) and David Grossman’s quarrel with the Israeli policy of not ending the Occupation reflect the historical lacuna at the heart of virtually all Israeli discourse: the long-planned, forcible, and often violent dispossession of 800,000 Palestinian Arabs from their homes, farms, businesses, and personal possessions from 1947 to 1949, in the view that Jews’ need for a homeland and the Zionist determination to locate it in Palestine trumped Palestinian Arab residents’ basic human rights.

By the end of the massive cleansing operation in the summer of 1949, more than 5,000 Palestinians had been killed. Israel controlled 78 percent of Palestine and within a short time had effectively stolen approximately 84 percent of the real estate behind the Green Line and had leveled most Palestinian villages.

Goldberg, Ehud Olmert, and Grossman alike acknowledge only post-1967 Palestinian grievances. This continued moral amnesia allows Israel’s dismissal of internationally recognized Palestinian refugee claims and its brazen pretense of generosity in offering to give up an East Jerusalem hinterland and the poorer half of the West Bank, which is divided by settlements and Israeli-only roadways. The reality remains: the wronged Palestinian millions refuse to go away.

William H. Slavick
Portland, Maine

Jeffrey Goldberg correctly notes that the Palestinian national movement “is perhaps the least successful national liberation movement of the 20th century.” Ironically, this has been as much a problem for Israel as for the Palestinian Arabs. Had the Palestinians at any time from 1948 on achieved statehood, Israel would likely not be at its present unfortunate pass.

What are we to make of this failure? It is certainly not for want of money, arms, or international political sympathy and support, which the Palestinians have reaped to an extraordinary extent. (What would a Kurdish nationalist give for a mere slice of the Palestinian pie?) Nor is it for want of territory. The Palestinians were offered half of the Palestinian Mandate in 1948 but refused it; and Arabs controlled the West Bank and Gaza from 1948 to 1967, yet no Palestinian political entity arose in either place, not even provisionally. Now Palestinians completely control Gaza, but rather than building a state there, they claim that they are under Israeli occupation.

The common explanation is that the Palestinians want a state encompassing the entire former Palestinian Mandate. But a more likely explanation is that the Palestinian national movement is not and has never been a national movement in the ordinary sense of the term. It was for a long time the vanguard of the Arab nationalist movement and is today the front line of aggressive Islamism. The establishment of a state is not the goal. The elimination of a foreign, non-Arab, non-Muslim entity in the Levant is.

Jonathan Keiler
Bowie, Md.

Jeffrey Goldberg’s piece sets forth a stark and arresting reality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: democracy is paralyzing the Israeli government. Ehud Olmert’s words of peace and withdrawal have thus far led to no action. How can they, when one body of citizens, led by the pioneering settlers of the Mercaz HaRav Yeshiva, claims that God will punish the Jews if they divide the holy land, while another sector of society, led by David Grossman, screams for immediate withdrawal? If Israel is to accomplish anything on the road to peace, it must find a way to square its democracy—the

linchpin of its legitimate standing as a nation among nations—with its ability to enter into meaningful compromise with the Palestinians, while still safeguarding the state of Israel as a Jewish homeland. The answer is not easy, but as Jeffrey Goldberg reveals, it must come fast.

Jake Englander
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Ehud Olmert may be inarticulate and lack vision, but I fundamentally disagree with Jeffrey Goldberg’s assertion that the “prime minister of Israel should be able to muster an argument for the necessity of his country.” Is there any other country in the world whose leader is subject to this demeaning test? Let’s just pick a few of the B’s: Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina. None of them were independent states in 1948. Are their leaders ever asked to muster such an argument? When the “necessity” quiz is applied everywhere, then we can start critiquing Olmert’s answer.

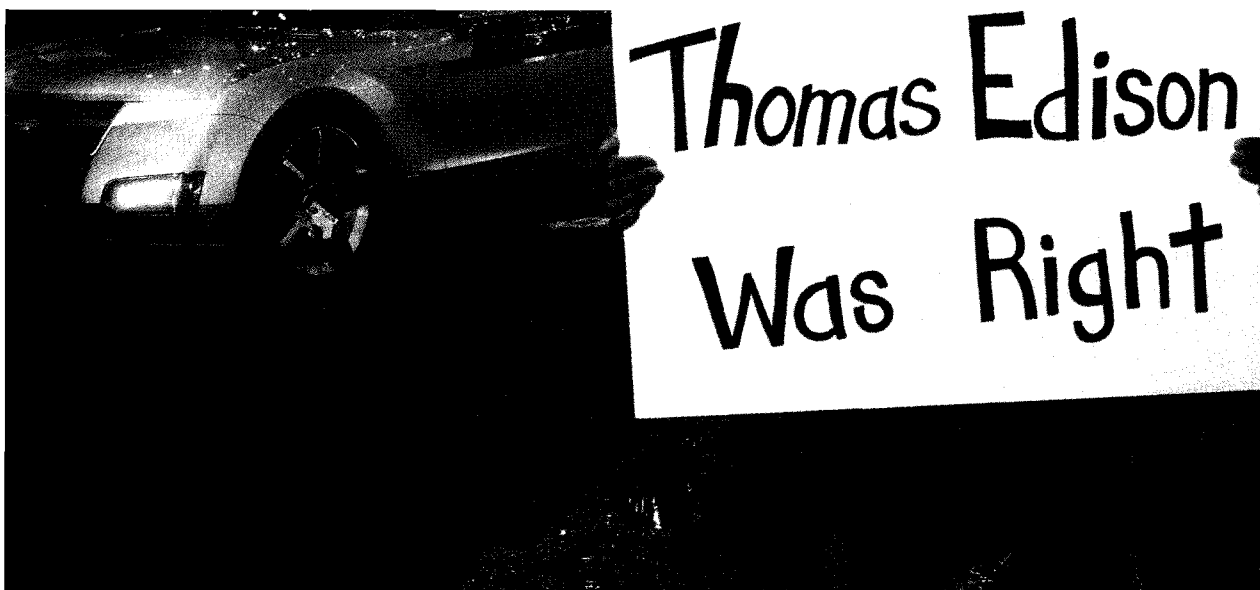
Ron Fein
Arlington, Mass.

COSBY’S CRUSADE

Contrary to what Ta-Nehisi Coates writes (“This is How We Lost to the White Man,” *May Atlantic*), *I Spy* was not the first weekly show to feature an African American in a lead role. Alvin Childress, Spencer Williams Jr., Tim Moore, and Ernestine Wade were the ensemble black cast of a comedy called *Amos ’n’ Andy* (1951–1953). Ethel Waters, Louise Beavers, Butterfly McQueen, and Ruby Dandridge were principal players in *Beulah* (1950–1953).

Rich Forman
Van Nuys, Calif.

On one level, many comparisons can be made between jazz and hip-hop and their respective impacts on black culture. I can even recall an interview



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Jelani Aliyu

Lead Exterior Designer, Chevrolet Volt



on *The Arsenio Hall Show* (if I may date myself) where Quincy Jones compared his son's boyhood love of hip-hop to his own childhood love of bebop (an earlier style of jazz). Sounds nice, but on every other level, this comparison is bogus and may in fact reveal something about what Cosby is saying. Just think for a minute about the thousands of hours it takes to learn to play and master an instrument, the relationship between the teacher and the student, the mentoring of a young musician on the road by older musicians, the sacrifices to find time to practice and play. In short, discipline and respect. I don't think Cosby is blind to the parallels between his arguments about hip-hop and those made in the past about jazz. I just think he has a point.

Chris Cordone
Los Angeles, Calif.

Ta-Nehisi Coates replies:

*I'd like to say to Chris Cordone, simply, don't knock it until you've tried it. Take it from someone who, in his deluded younger years, did indeed try—hip-hop is a lot more complicated than rhyming couplets and stolen drum riffs. I'd ask you to spend some time with a few gems (Nas's *Illmatic* or *De La Soul's* 3 Feet High and Rising are good starts) and a few stinkers (just turn on BET or your local pop-rap radio affiliate), and then form an opinion. I would not, from a mere sample of Kenny G or even John Coltrane, make any broad statements about jazz. Those of us who were shaped by hip-hop are only asking the same.*

BACK TO THE '70s

We agree for the most part with Ross Douthat's cultural analysis of current film trends ("The Return of the Paranoid Style," April *Atlantic*) as harking back to the suspiciousness of the 1970s, but one recent film was overlooked, perhaps because it did not fit the contemporary mode of the films discussed in the article.

Like *Tears of the Sun*, the film *300* is an outlier that runs counter to the '70s-throwback hypothesis. In *300*, we see freedom-loving Occidental men

standing for vaguely democratic self-governance against what can only be described as a mob of swarthy foreign invaders directed by a megalomaniacal religious fanatic intent on subjugating or destroying the birthplace of Western ideology. Even the sacrifice made by the 300 Spartans is made to seem glorious compared with the empty and treacherous temporary victory of the Persians.

Where does *300* fit, in Douthat's paradigm? The film was a box-office success, and it was attacked by many cultural critics for promoting prejudicial attitudes toward Middle Easterners, fostering a spirit of warmongering, and glorifying the kind of masculine violence Susan Faludi predicted.

Seth Tomko and Jenny Zimmerman
Macon, Ga.

Ross Douthat replies:

*Seth Tomko and Jenny Zimmerman are correct: the Spartans-versus-Persians battle royal in 300 is an interesting case, and one that would have been worth touching on in my essay. As they point out, the movie can be read as a cartoonish war-on-terror allegory, so in that sense it's an exception to my thesis. But it's an exception that suggests contemporary Hollywood is comfortable siding with the West only when the West is in question—in this case, a video-game version of ancient Sparta—is remote both from our own era and from reality itself. In this regard, it's worth contrasting 300 with Ridley Scott's *Crusades* epic, *Kingdom of Heaven*, a film whose contemporary resonances were more explicit, and whose politics, as a result, were much more in keeping with the paranoid style, casting Christian fanatics as the only villains of the story.*

POLARIZATION VS. PARTISANSHIP

The title and subtitle of Matthew Yglesias's piece, "The Case for Partisanship" and "Why polarization is good for us" (April *Atlantic*), are at odds with each other. It's vitally important to keep the two distinct.

Yglesias is right in saying that political scientists, unlike the average American

voter, like political parties. Parties are efficient mediums for translating preferences among voters into public policy: vote Party A and get more social welfare, vote Party B and get lower taxes. When members of Congress routinely break ranks, it is hard to know what you're getting when you vote for Party A. Partisanship as "party discipline" is unproblematic, and most democracies have much more of it than America does.

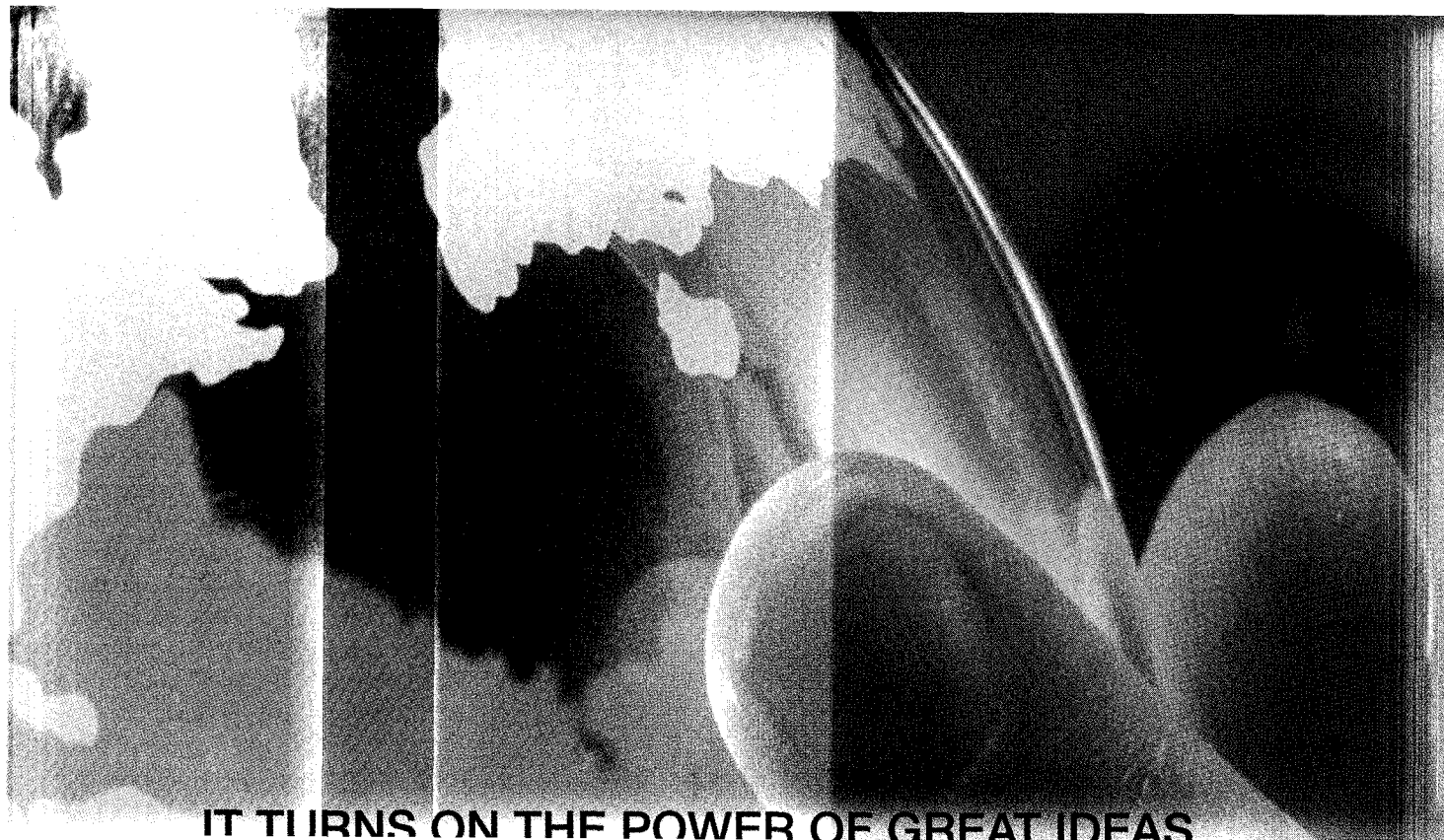
But polarization is different. Many issues demonstrate how polarization precisely fails to translate public wishes into policy. Abortion is one. Most Americans reluctantly support legal first-term abortions. But we are stuck with one party that wants to ban abortion entirely and another that wants to keep it legal until shortly before birth.

Parties in other Anglo-Saxon democracies have, since the end of the Cold War, been mostly de-ideologized, and they compete for the middle, floating voter: think of Britain's market-friendly New Labour and its newly gay- and environment-friendly Conservatives. But in America, gerrymandering, the primary system, the power of lobby groups, and the lack of publicly financed elections are systemically pushing the parties apart ideologically. Add in opportunistic behaviors, like the cynical use of race, religion, and patriotism as wedges, and you have the polarization—not mere partisanship—that infuriates the centrist and sensible average American.

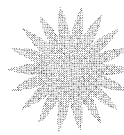
Robert Lane Greene
Brooklyn, N.Y.

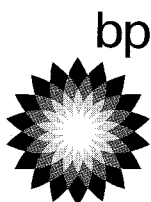
Matthew Yglesias replies:

Robert Lane Greene draws an important distinction between the coherence and discipline of the parties (what he calls "partisanship") and the ideological and emotional distance between them (what he calls "polarization"). These are, indeed, separate phenomena, and their merits deserve to be considered separately. My intention was to defend rising coherence—and the decline of the cross-party deal maker as the central figure in American politics—as an overall beneficial development.



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THE DECLINE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE?

I read B. R. Myers's piece with my usual appreciation for his style and erudition ("Keeping a Civil Tongue," April *Atlantic*). Even so, I must nitpick. Myers writes, "Prophets are always choosy about their followers; Jesus spoke in parables so the multitude would *not* be saved." With all due respect, this is completely wrong: Jesus spoke in parables specifically to reach his largely illiterate audience. He compressed some fairly tricky (and often unprecedented) theological concepts into stories that every single one of his listeners could understand. I'd ask Myers to pick a parable at random, read it to a group of third-graders, and watch easy, unforced comprehension spread like sunlight. The parables are effectively inclusive; that's their singular and immortal beauty.

Steve Donoghue
South Boston, Mass.

In his review of Ian Robinson's new book, B. R. Myers makes a minor point that constitutes a serious distortion of U.S. history and deforms contemporary debates over immigration. Myers observes that "many immigrants ... *now* refuse to learn more than a little transactional English," revealing that "an economic community is all they want to be part of" (emphasis mine). Insofar as Myers's *now* purports to signify that something important has changed, he couldn't be more wrong.

Immigrants to these shores have always been a diverse lot, of course, and so have their motives, but since the beginning, economic opportunity has been the major component of America's attraction—even for those who came for more-idealistic reasons as well. Most immigrants remained more comfortable using their mother tongue and lived in virtually homogeneous urban neighborhoods or rural communities where very little English was needed. At the turn of the 20th century, newspapers were published by the hundreds in Yiddish, German, Russian, and a dozen other languages.

Commitment to something richer and more valuable than mere economic advancement was what distinguished strong families and communities from the larger society. Indeed, their integrity was to a large degree bound up with their reluctance (or inability) to fully assimilate, and it was often their rapidly assimilating children who became associated with urban problems, from delinquency to cosmopolitan anomie.

The irony is not, as Myers contends, that pluralism will undermine prosperity. It is that the drive for upward mobility will erode cultural and linguistic pluralism, profoundly weakening a host of less durable but important values along the way. If anything, English is more hegemonic now than ever. If young aspirers from Seoul to New Delhi to Bucharest to Beijing are eager to learn English, you can be sure that their counterparts here will eventually do so, too.

John H. Haas

South Bend, Ind.

B. R. Myers replies:

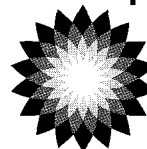
I humbly refer Steve Donoghue to Mark 4:11-12, in which Jesus says he speaks to "them that are without ... in parables: That ... they may hear, and not understand, lest at any time they should be converted." John Haas makes some excellent points, but I still think things have changed. I mean not just the recent increase in the number of U.S. citizens (a triple-fold one in some states) who speak no English, but also the general assumption that the government must serve them in their languages: this is new. So-called Global English will carry the day, all right, but among the many languages and value systems it will erode will be our own. Belonging to everyone, "the world's language" belongs to no one; there is no national soul in the sterile thing. I'd rather speak Korean.

Editors' Note:

The caption on page 79 of the April Atlantic should have stated that millions of people, not millions of pedestrians, are estimated to cross Kolkata's Howrah Bridge each day. We regret the error.

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THE AGENDA

JULY/AUGUST 2008 THE ATLANTIC



COMMENT

Financial bubbles are like epidemics—
and we should treat them both the same way.

Infectious Exuberance

BY ROBERT J. SHILLER

“America, from its inception, was a speculation,” begins the historian Aaron M. Sakolski’s 1932 classic, *The Great American Land Bubble*. George Washington himself was a land speculator, Sakolski notes, and by Washington’s time it was widely perceived that America would eventually be populated much more densely by vast numbers of immigrants, leading many investors to dream of rapidly rising land prices. Waves of speculative mania swept towns, cities, and regions from the 18th century onward, even along the vast and empty

frontier. Up, up went the prices. And then, inevitably, down.

Sakolski was seeking to make sense of the biggest national housing bust in American history—at least so far. It began in 1926 and spread to the stock market in 1929, triggering a severe banking crisis that in turn affected almost all types of businesses. Home prices fell a total of 30 percent from 1925 to 1933, and the unemployment rate reached 25 percent at the depth of the Great Depression.

Many culprits have been fingered for the housing crisis we’re in today:

unscrupulous mortgage lenders, dishonest borrowers, underregulated financial institutions. And all of them played a role. But too little attention has been paid to the most fundamental cause, the same one that was at the root of the many booms and busts that Sakolski chronicled years ago: the contagious optimism, seemingly impervious to facts, that often takes hold when prices are rising. Bubbles are primarily social phenomena; until we understand and address the psychology that fuels them, they’re going to keep forming.

And unless we apply that understanding to the bubble we're trying to recover from, we risk calamity.

Bubbles are a lot like epidemics. Every disease has a transmission rate (the rate at which it spreads from person to person) and a removal rate (the rate at which those individuals recover from or succumb to the illness and so are no longer contagious). If the transmission rate exceeds the removal rate by a certain amount, an epidemic begins.

Speculative bubbles are fueled by the social contagion of boom thinking, encouraged by rising prices. Sooner or later, some factor boosts the transmis-

sion rate high enough above the removal rate for an optimistic view of the market to become widespread. Arguments that this boom is unlike past bubbles—I call them “new era” stories—become more prominent and seemingly credible. In the recent housing boom, such optimism was much in evidence. A survey that Karl Case and I conducted in 2005, for instance, found that on average, San Francisco home buyers expected housing prices to increase by 14 percent a year over the next 10 years. About a quarter of the respondents reported truly extravagant expectations—occasionally more than 50 percent a year.

In this sort of environment, skeptics have a hard time of it. No one has perfect information, and people—quite rationally—infer a great deal from the actions of others. As a bubble expands,

some skeptics begin to disregard their own judgment because they feel that everyone else simply couldn't be wrong. Contrarian voices become softer, which only makes it harder for the remaining skeptics to justify their views. Over time, the quality of information that can be gleaned from the behavior of others becomes worse and worse.

Few people seem immune to boom thinking. The recent bubble grew so large partly because the very people responsible for the financial system's oversight came to share the general public's rosy expectations. They may not have believed as fervently in the boom, but

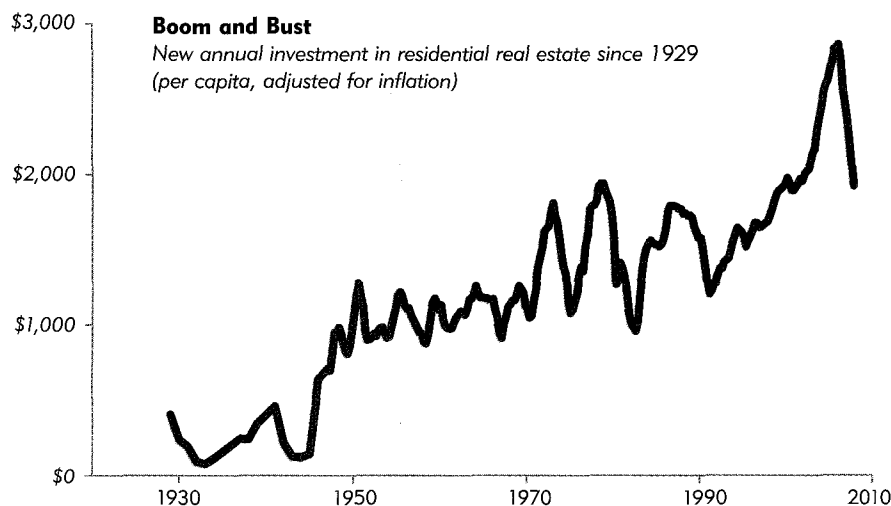
they still accepted the idea that it would not end badly. Builders kept building, and ratings agencies did not temper their sunny assessments of mortgage securities until after the crisis had begun. In October 2006, Frank Nothaft, the chief economist at Freddie Mac, a major securitizer of home mortgages, told me that Freddie Mac had financially modeled the impact of a price decline of up to 13.4 percent. When I asked him about the possibility of a bigger drop, he replied that such a drop had never happened (at least not since the Great Depression)—and he seemed unable to imagine that it could.

Since the 2006 peak, housing prices, adjusted for inflation, have fallen nearly 15 percent. Where they'll go from here is uncertain; we are in uncharted

territory. Between 1997 and 2006, real home prices in the United States rose 85 percent; this run-up was historically unprecedented. There was no rational basis for it: fundamental indicators such as the ratio of home prices to building costs, or to rents, or to personal income, also soared, suggesting unsustainable price levels. (The idea that the country is running out of residential space is no more true now than it was during the manias of the 18th and 19th centuries.)

Already, the crisis has infected other sectors besides housing. Credit-card and automobile-loan defaults have been increasing. The credit ratings of municipal-bond insurers are being downgraded, and the market for corporate debt is troubled. If housing prices keep falling, the impact of the crisis on the broader economy will be amplified further. Both Sweden and Mexico experienced severe recessions after profligate mortgage-lending booms in the early 1990s. Japan suffered a “lost decade” after its housing bubble burst in 1991. We may wish to think of the current economic setback as a one-act play, soon to end, but it could be only the first act of a long and complex tragedy.

How can we inoculate ourselves against a recurrence of this whole awful cycle? Government officials today are rightly pushing regulatory reform to prevent lending abuses and reckless behavior among financial institutions. But that doesn't address our psychological vulnerability to bubble thinking, which seems greater than it's ever been. During the stock-market boom of the 1990s, the national psyche, long infused with a Protestant work ethic, seemed to undergo a transformation, and the idea arose that we could expect to make a lot of money by investing. At the same time, the proportion of Americans owning stocks and homes was increasing. We should be happy that more people are investors and homeowners today, but those latest to the game are often the least sophisticated players, most susceptible to irrational optimism—one reason why the most-recent stock and housing bubbles grew so large.



AARP: Founded on the simple premise that no one should have to live in a chicken coop.

In 1947 on a meager pension, it was all one retired teacher could afford.

That's when Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus, a retired high school principal, made a shocking discovery. On a visit to a former teacher, she found the woman living in an old chicken coop, in poor health and unable to afford medical care.

Ethel got mad. She also got organized. After helping that first teacher, she turned her efforts to helping others with a campaign to obtain affordable health insurance for retired teachers. Over 40 companies turned her down, but she persevered and eventually succeeded. She soon discovered that many other older people needed help as well, and in 1958, she founded AARP.

Today as the nation's leading membership organization — nearly 40 million strong — AARP remains committed to championing the needs of our members and the future of every generation.

We do this by focusing on the five things every generation shares:

- The need for health
- The need for financial security
- The need for community
- The need to give back to society
- The need to enjoy life

Meeting these needs and ensuring the quality of life for all as we age is no small task. It requires a unique three-part organization.

AARP, the parent, is a strong nonprofit, nonpartisan advocate for consumer rights and provides trusted information with our publications, voter education guides, research and a website that cover the issues our members care about most.

The AARP Foundation is our charitable arm. It provides services to both members and nonmembers — especially the most vulnerable in society. Our Foundation delivers direct services such as the nation's largest free, volunteer-run tax assistance program and legal advocacy work to support the rights of older people across the country.

Finally, AARP Services, Inc. makes available products and services designed specifically for the 50+ consumer — many of whom might otherwise be excluded from the market. We do this by working with leading businesses to identify and respond to the ever-changing needs of Americans as they age. These relationships not only help shape the marketplace, but also earn revenue that helps AARP achieve its mission of leading positive social change and delivering value to members.

When she founded AARP 50 years ago, Ethel proclaimed that “an army of useful citizens” can do what no one person can. Today we at AARP champion her dream and serve all generations through vigorous action and by never forgetting the one act of compassion that started it all.

Learn more about AARP's history and our continuing mission at aarp.org/champion.



Irrational exuberance is bound to pop up from time to time; we can't stop it altogether. But we probably can limit it, preventing some bubbles and keeping others smaller. Boom thinking is carried along by bad arguments and bad information. The key to keeping the transmission rate low and the removal rate high, if you will, is better dissemination of reliable information—something the government should focus on over the coming years.

Many households have access to very little financial insight. In most cases, the only financial professionals they come into contact with are trying to sell them

We also need to get better—and more—information to more-sophisticated investors and financial professionals. In real estate, one important way of doing that is by further developing the financial market rather than focusing only on regulating it or reining it in. For instance, real-estate futures markets, which have existed since 2006 but are still in their infancy, have the potential to tame future housing bubbles. Without them, there is no way for skeptical investors who think they see a rising bubble to express that opinion in the market, except by selling their own homes. If futures markets grow, then

are magnified by group thinking. And once busts become severe enough, they prompt changes in the national mood that ramify well beyond economic affairs. Benjamin M. Friedman, in his 2005 book, *The Moral Consequences of Economic Growth*, cites abundant historical evidence that when economic prospects look bleak—especially for long periods of time—intolerance, racism, and other reactionary impulses flourish. As more people experience hardship, trust between them tends to diminish, and the social fabric itself seems to fray.

If home prices keep dropping, more bailouts of banks and broker-dealers likely will be necessary to prevent the paralysis of the financial system and a severe loss of confidence in our economy and economic institutions. And if we aim to stop foreclosures, with all their ugly consequences, from spreading further, many, many homeowners are going to need loan refinancing—which will need to be provided or backed by the government. Bailouts of investors and prospective bailouts of unwise or unlucky home buyers have stirred a lot of controversy, and indeed, financial bailouts are, for many reasons, unsavory. But given the severity of the current financial seize-up, they are needed—not to prop up Wall Street profits or housing prices, but to prevent a fundamental loss of economic confidence and to maintain a sense of social justice for those of modest means. Losses of confidence and trust can mount with surprising speed, and beyond a certain point they become very difficult to recover from.

We recently lived through two epidemics of excessive financial optimism. I believe that we are close to a third epidemic, only this one would spread irrational pessimism and mistrust—not exuberance. If that happens, our economic problems will become much worse than they need to be, and our social problems will multiply. Only if we heed the lessons of the boom can we keep the bust from causing lasting damage. ▀

Robert J. Shiller is a professor of economics at Yale University. This article is drawn from his forthcoming book, *The Subprime Solution*, to be published in August by Princeton University Press.

We may wish to think of the current setback as a one-act play, soon to end, but it could be only the first act of a long and complex tragedy.

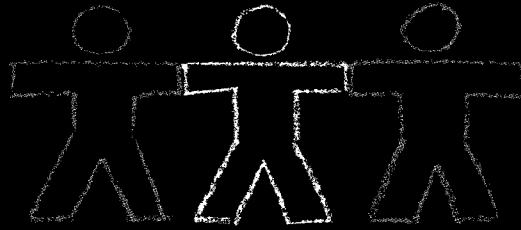
something, whether it's a mortgage or a stock. Independent financial advisers, who provide more-comprehensive advice, have typically been available only to the relatively wealthy. The questions most people need answered are elementary: How risky is this investment? Have prices ever gone up this fast for this long before? Can I afford this loan if interest rates rise? But they're not getting straight answers to these questions.

Financial advice is in some respects like medical advice: we need both on an ongoing basis, and failure to obtain either can impose costs on society when our health—physical or financial—suffers. There's a strong case to be made that the government should subsidize comprehensive financial advice for low- and middle-income Americans to help prevent bubbly thinking and financial overextension. One way to do this would be through co-pay arrangements like those in place for Medicare or for private health insurance. Accredited advisers, charging a flat fee, would be partially reimbursed by the government; the moderate costs to consumers would create a much broader market for their services.

any skeptic anywhere in the world could profit from a bubble in, say, Las Vegas, by short-selling real estate there. Substantial short-selling would reduce bubbles, and provide information to home builders, ratings agencies, and others. In turn, builders, for instance, might not overbuild if they see that most of the money in the futures markets is being bet on price declines.

Subsidized financial advice and the encouragement of real-estate futures markets are just two examples of the sorts of actions that could limit future bubbles. The larger point is that increasing the amount, accessibility, and reliability of information about investments should be a high priority for policy makers. Epidemiology suggests that even very small changes to the transmission rate of a disease can make the difference between an epidemic and a low-incidence disease. If better information inoculated even relatively few people against boom thinking, that could prevent many bubbles from rising.

There's another, more urgent reason to focus on the idea of social contagion today. Like booms, many busts



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THE **Atlantic**

FICTION ISSUE 2008

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AND **CRISTINA HENRÍQUEZ**

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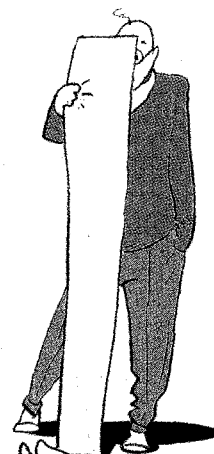
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What to watch for in the weeks ahead Calendar

COMPILED BY MATTHEW QUIRK



JULY No Sale

1 Vietnam, a popular option for would-be American parents, stops accepting adoption applications from the U.S. today, after the American Embassy in Hanoi reported that Vietnamese adoption agents were demanding bribes and that hospitals were selling the babies of mothers who couldn't pay their bills.

JULY Drug Pedalers

5 Back-to-back doping scandals have prompted the Tour de France to clean up its act. Before this year's race, which begins today, riders must submit to a comprehensive blood test in an effort to expose doping. Last year's champ, Alberto Contador, of Spain, likely won't defend his title: his team has been banned because of past drug scandals.

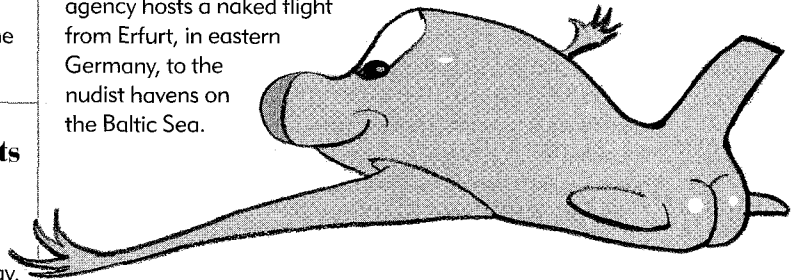
JULY Chrysler Shifts Into Neutral

7 Faced with falling sales, Chrysler shuts down for two weeks starting today. The company has asked all but essential staff to take vacations simultaneously and will idle its factories to cut costs.



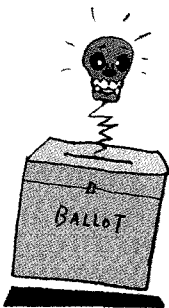
JULY Moon Over Munich

5 Germany's many nudists have long had resorts where they could relax, shop, and dine in the buff. Beginning today, they'll be able to fly to them unencumbered: a travel agency hosts a naked flight from Erfurt, in eastern Germany, to the nudist havens on the Baltic Sea.



JULY Alleyways and Old Lace

15 Another bizarre Los Angeles crime saga wraps up today, as the second of two elderly women is sentenced for murdering two homeless men for insurance money. Olga Rutterschmidt and Helen Golay befriended, housed, and insured the men, then drugged and killed them in staged hit-and-runs in secluded alleys. The women reaped \$2.8 million, and both now face life without parole.



JULY Rep. Death?

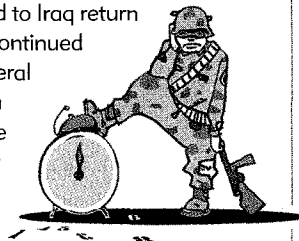
17 Jack "Dr. Death" Kevorkian, the retired pathologist and right-to-die advocate who served eight years in prison for assisting a suicide, is running for Congress in Michigan. He needs to deliver 3,000 signatures by today's deadline to make the ballot.

AUG Kowtow

1 Starting today, American corporations will contend with a new set of regulators. China's new antimonopoly law increases its ability to approve foreign mergers and acquisitions involving Chinese companies, putting its oversight power on a par with that of the EU and the U.S. This raises the concern that China will use its new powers for political ends, as critics say the U.S. does.

ALSO IN JULY Stuck in the Sand

The "surge" formally ends in July, when most of the additional troops deployed to Iraq return home, but the odds of a continued drawdown look slim. General David Petraeus testified in April that Iraq is too fragile and its army too green for the U.S. to diminish its presence there.

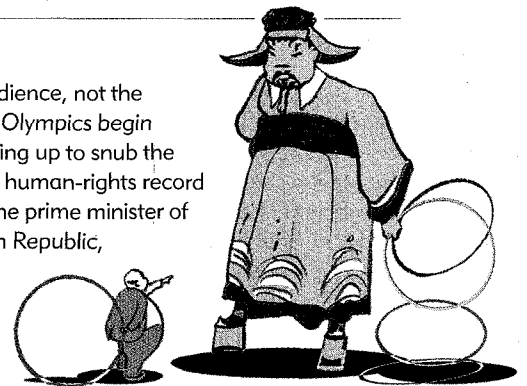


Mr. Mom

Thomas Beatie, the expectant transgender dad of tabloid fame, is due to give birth in July. Beatie kept his below-the-belt female organs during a sex change a decade ago, thus enabling him to step in as child-bearer for his wife, Nancy, who'd had a hysterectomy.

AUG Olympic Disdain

8 The focus may be the audience, not the torch, when the Summer Olympics begin tonight. Foreign dignitaries are lining up to snub the Games in order to protest China's human-rights record and recent crackdown in Tibet. The prime minister of Poland, the president of the Czech Republic, and Prince Charles are boycotting them, and French President Nicolas Sarkozy is considering sitting them out, too.



AUG Taylor Trial Kicks Off

25 Four men go on trial in Miami today for the murder of 24-year-old Washington Redskins safety Sean Taylor last November. Taylor was shot during a botched burglary while his girlfriend and child hid in bed.

PRIMARY SOURCES

EDUCATION

The Kids Are Alright

Critics of the Teach for America program, which recruits top college graduates to teach in poorly performing public schools, have long questioned whether the program's instructors are properly prepared, citing evidence that links teacher effectiveness to experience. However, the first study to examine Teach for America at the secondary-school level, recently released by the Urban Institute, finds that its teachers are in fact more effective than those with traditional training—at all levels of experience. The study measured performance on state exams and found that students of Teach for

America instructors did significantly better in all subject areas tested, and especially in math and science. The authors found that even though the program's teachers are assigned to "the most demanding classrooms," they're able to compensate for their lack of experience with better academic preparation and motivation. As a result, the authors say, students are better off with Teach for America instructors "than with fully licensed in-field teachers with three or more years of experience."

—"Making a Difference?: The Effects of Teach for America in High School," by Zeyu Xu, Jane Hannaway, and Colin Taylor, the Urban Institute and the National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research



THE KINGDOM and the powerless

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Suffer, Little Children

In Saudi Arabia, breaking the law can lead to the chopping block for a public beheading—even for minors, according to a new report. The first fact-finding visit by a human-rights group allowed by the Saudi government turned up disturbing evidence about the country's justice system: children under 18 are routinely tried as adults, with potential sentences of flogging, amputation, or death; legal counsel is often unavailable for youth offenders; and juvenile-detention facilities are so overcrowded and poorly supervised that minors sometimes end up in the same cells as

hardened criminals. Many of the tens of thousands of children trafficked into the country—for use as beggars or for sexual exploitation—end up on the streets, where they're treated as criminals and risk deportation. Youths can be detained for exchanging phone numbers with the opposite sex, and girls can face prosecution for "seclusion," or being alone with a male who's not a relative. The authors report that at least 12 children have been sentenced to death in recent years, and that at least three were executed in 2007.

—"Adults Before Their Time: Children in Saudi Arabia's Criminal Justice System," Human Rights Watch

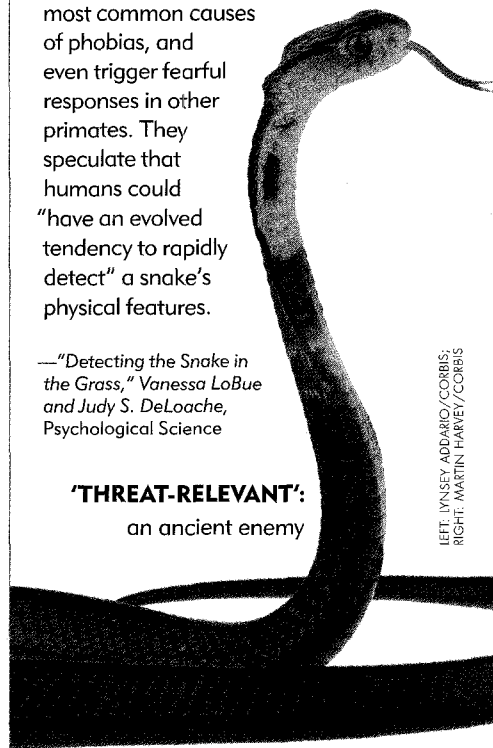
PSYCHOLOGY

Zero at the Bone

"I hate snakes!" says the otherwise fearless Indiana Jones. He's not alone: according to a new study, humans may have a built-in aversion to snakes and their hissing, slithering, menacing ways. Two researchers at the University of Virginia asked 120 preschool-age children and their parents to look at two sets of nine color photographs on a monitor. They told the subjects to pick out the one photo that was "threat-relevant" (a snake) among eight others that were nonthreats (flowers) from the first set. Then they asked the subjects to pick the one flower among eight snake pictures in the second set. Each time, they measured the subjects' response times. The adults, as expected, found the snake more rapidly than they found the flowers. But the children—even those who had had no prior exposure to snakes—also picked out the threat significantly faster. When the experimenters repeated the test, substituting frogs and caterpillars for the flowers, the kids still found the snake fastest—suggesting an innate predisposition to see a snake as a threat. The authors note that serpents are one of the most common causes of phobias, and even trigger fearful responses in other primates. They speculate that humans could "have an evolved tendency to rapidly detect" a snake's physical features.

—"Detecting the Snake in the Grass," Vanessa LoBue and Judy S. DeLoache, Psychological Science

'THREAT-RELEVANT':
an ancient enemy



LEFT: LYNSEY ADDARIO/CORBIS;
RIGHT: MARTIN HARVEY/CORBIS



Is tomorrow's energy right in front of us?

Where on earth could we find enough oil to power 60 million cars for 60 years? And enough natural gas to heat 160 million households for 60 years?

You might be surprised to learn that the answer is right here, in America – 112 billion barrels of oil and 656 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, just on federal lands.

But, as the saying goes, these vital domestic resources are often "so close, yet so far." Why? Because current government policies – a tangled mix of federal and state regulatory restrictions – put a large portion of these oil and natural gas resources, many on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS), off-limits to production.

In fact, the U.S. government estimates that there are 30 billion barrels of undiscovered technically recoverable oil on federal lands currently closed to development.

New technological breakthroughs allow us to tap these resources, even in "ultra deep waters," while protecting fragile marine environments. Recently, oil and natural gas companies employed advanced technologies to discover vast amounts of new oil and natural gas in the Gulf of Mexico – resources beyond our technical reach just a few years ago.

The U.S. Department of Energy predicts America will need 19 percent more energy in 2030 than we use today. Meeting this demand, and ensuring our future energy security, requires developing more energy from more sources, including our own oil and natural gas resources.

Oil and natural gas not only heat our homes and fuel transportation, they also provide the building blocks for everything from medicines to advanced communications equipment. And developing America's untapped energy resources means a stronger economy and more American jobs. That's real economic stimulus – and it would allow increased funding for federal, state and local government budgets.

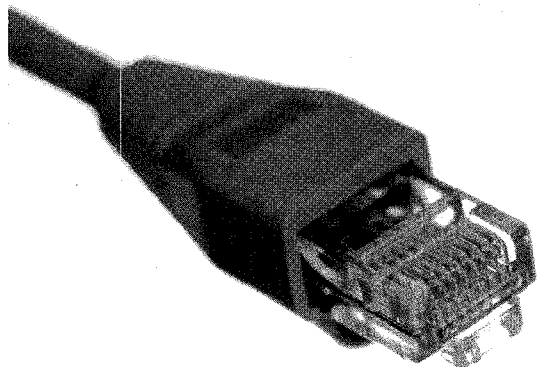
Oil and natural gas make possible our unequalled quality of life. Ensuring such for future Americans will require policies that permit responsible, respectful access to America's plentiful domestic oil and natural gas resources. These valuable resources are within our reach. Let's work together to realize their potential.

THE *people* OF AMERICA'S
OIL AND NATURAL GAS INDUSTRY

**85% of
lower 48 OCS
acreage is off-
limits to oil &
natural gas
development**

EnergyTomorrow.org

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TECHNOLOGY

Missed Connections

Considering that Americans invented the Internet nearly four decades ago, the U.S. has had a tough time actually getting people online. According to a report by the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, the United States ranks 15th out of 30 developed countries in broadband performance, as measured by speed, price, and subscribers per household. Since widespread broadband access appears to result from both happenstance and good governance—with an emphasis on the former—America will likely have trouble catching up with the survey's leader, South Korea, and with other highly ranked countries such as Sweden. Although the U.S. and South Korea have similar percentages of urban residents, more than half of Korean housing units are large apartment complexes, compared with only 3.2 percent in the U.S. As a result, Korean Internet operators can reach 10 times as many people as a provider in an East Coast suburb using the same amount of fiber-optic cable. Policy-wise, the U.S. also faces an uphill battle: the Swedish government has spent roughly \$90 per citizen to encourage broadband deployment; a similar commitment in the U.S. would cost more than \$30 billion. Though the study found that factors beyond government control, like population density, explain about three-quarters of the differences in broadband performance, the authors offer some recommendations for Uncle Sam, like better tax policies, programs to boost digital literacy, and a coherent national broadband strategy. But absent a government takeover of Verizon, or mass migrations into towering apartment complexes, our broadband access is likely to lag far behind that of our high-tech peers.

—“Explaining International Broadband Leadership,” Robert D. Atkinson, Daniel K. Correa, and Julie A. Hedlund, *Information Technology and Innovation Foundation*

CRIME

Cyber Suckers

Despite spending ever more time and money on the Internet, Americans don't seem to be wising up to online scams. According to a report by the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center, while total complaints about online scams remained flat last year (at some 200,000), fraudsters made off with more dough than ever—\$239 million, up about 20 percent over 2006. Fraud on auction sites like eBay caused the most complaints. But with an average loss of \$484 per incident, such schemes are small change compared with investment fraud (\$3,548 per incident), check scams (\$3,000), and Nigerian e-mail

rope-a-dopes (\$1,923—no joke). The feds also warn about secret-shopper scams, in which victims are hired to help evaluate retail outlets or restaurants. They get a bad check in the mail and are told to quickly wire a percent of the total to a third party to cover costs; by the time the check bounces, their money is gone. Scammers also snared many victims through their hearts, on dating and social-networking sites. In these cons, the putative love interest asks for money to pay for travel to an amorous meeting, then claims to undergo a series of expensive disasters—and asks for more cash.

—“2007 Internet Crime Report,” *Internet Crime Complaint Center, FBI*



NO THANK YOU, I only buy name-brand broadsword.

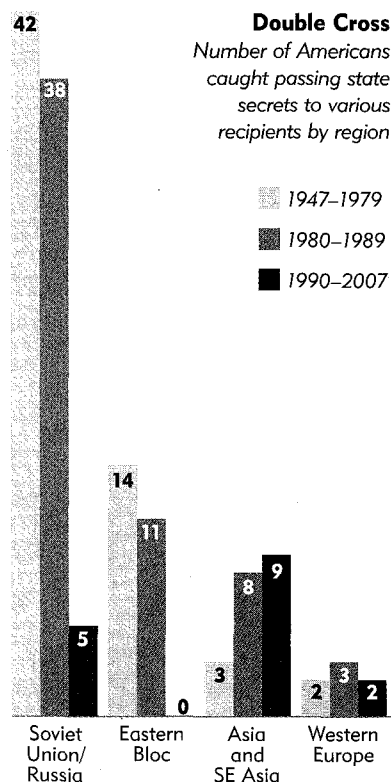
ECONOMICS

Ye Olde Corporate Branding Strategy

Shopping at medieval markets was a risky business, in which “caveat emptor” was the wisdom of the day. But according to an economist at the University of California at Irvine—who analyzed mercantile records, internal guild documents, and other commercial artifacts—the market evolved to compensate for this risk through the proliferation of “conspicuous characteristics” that helped customers identify which guild had produced their goods. The author notes that because medical treatments were unreliable in the Middle Ages, the stakes for purchasing quality products, especially tools, were high: one out of every six accidental deaths took place in an agricultural field, on a construction site, or in a workshop. But high costs meant that buyers couldn't easily

replace flawed goods. To make matters worse, it was hard to hold manufacturers accountable for the quality of their products, because buyers usually dealt with roaming merchants, not local craftspeople. As a consequence, buyers were willing to pay more for goods that came from reputable outlets, and this encouraged manufacturers to fashion their products with identifying features, such as uniquely colored cloth, fabric with a recognizable weave, or pewter that resonated at a particular pitch when dinged. Cooks familiar with the distinctive pattern of Damascus steel will not be surprised to learn that the knives' lacy look was a conspicuous characteristic that identified swords forged in Damascus as “stronger, sharper, and sturdier” than the competition's.

—“Brand Names Before the Industrial Revolution,” Gary Richardson, *National Bureau of Economic Research*



INTELLIGENCE

The Modern Spy

Think you can spot a spy? Cold War caricatures won't help: a study by a Defense Department think tank finds that the profile of a homegrown spook has changed significantly in the past two decades, reflecting new threats from abroad. The report compares data on nearly 200 Americans caught spying on their countrymen since 1947, using public records and classified files from federal agencies. Today's spies tend to be much older than their Cold War predecessors, more educated (twice as many have advanced degrees), and less likely to be drunks or gamblers. Black-mail—of the compromising-photo variety, say—is no longer a salient motivation.

In fact, according to the study, no one is known to have been coerced into spying since 1980. Most spies are not even lured by cash: in the past two decades, only 7 percent of spooks passed on secrets solely for the money (74 percent did so during the Cold War), and 81 percent received no money at all. Instead, they're typically spurred by loyalty to other countries and causes, partly because many more of them are foreign-born. More than half of the most recent cases involved terrorists, and spies are now much more likely to pass secrets to stateless groups like al-Qaeda—which technically may not be a crime. The ambiguous legal framework governing espionage dates back to World War I and seems to address only spying done on behalf of foreign states.

—“Changes in Espionage by Americans: 1947–2007,” Katherine L. Herbig, Defense Personnel Security Research Center

For links to the documents discussed in this section, visit www.theatlantic.com/doc/200807/primarysources.



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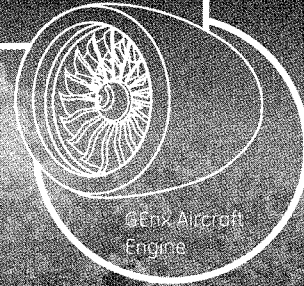
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REPORT

Why Vladimir Putin's successful effort
to handpick his replacement may backfire

The Master and Medvedev

BY JEFFREY TAYLER

Dmitry Anatol'yevich Medvedev's inauguration as Russia's president was supposed to ensure stability—for his predecessor, mentor, and now self-selected prime minister, Vladimir Putin, and for the Russian people, who are enjoying their first sustained prosperity since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In effect, when Russian voters went to the polls in March, they granted Putin, whose approval rating hovers between 70 and 80 percent, the moral and de facto right to remain the country's leader, albeit one working from Russia's White House (the seat of government) and not the Kremlin.

Yet far from settling the issue of who runs Russia, the instatement of the Medvedev-Putin duo opens an era potentially fraught with danger. Not only does any form of power-sharing run counter to the currents of Russian history, but Medvedev's electoral victory followed nasty factional struggles among those passed over by Putin—struggles that could still bear bitter fruit. And despite Medvedev's demonstrated loyalty, the alchemy of power may yet inspire him to unseat the man who put him in office.

Dyarchy has never worked in Russia. Most recently, in 1993, the standoff between President Boris Yeltsin and his vice president, Alexander Rutskoi, ended only when the former shelled the latter's lair in the White House. (Russia has had no vice president since then.) Traditions of autocracy, in fact, extend back to the 15th-century rise of Muscovy and have left an indelible, even determining, imprint on Russian political consciousness. For many Russians, the chaos of the Yeltsin years—when the Kremlin commanded little respect and ceded powers to other



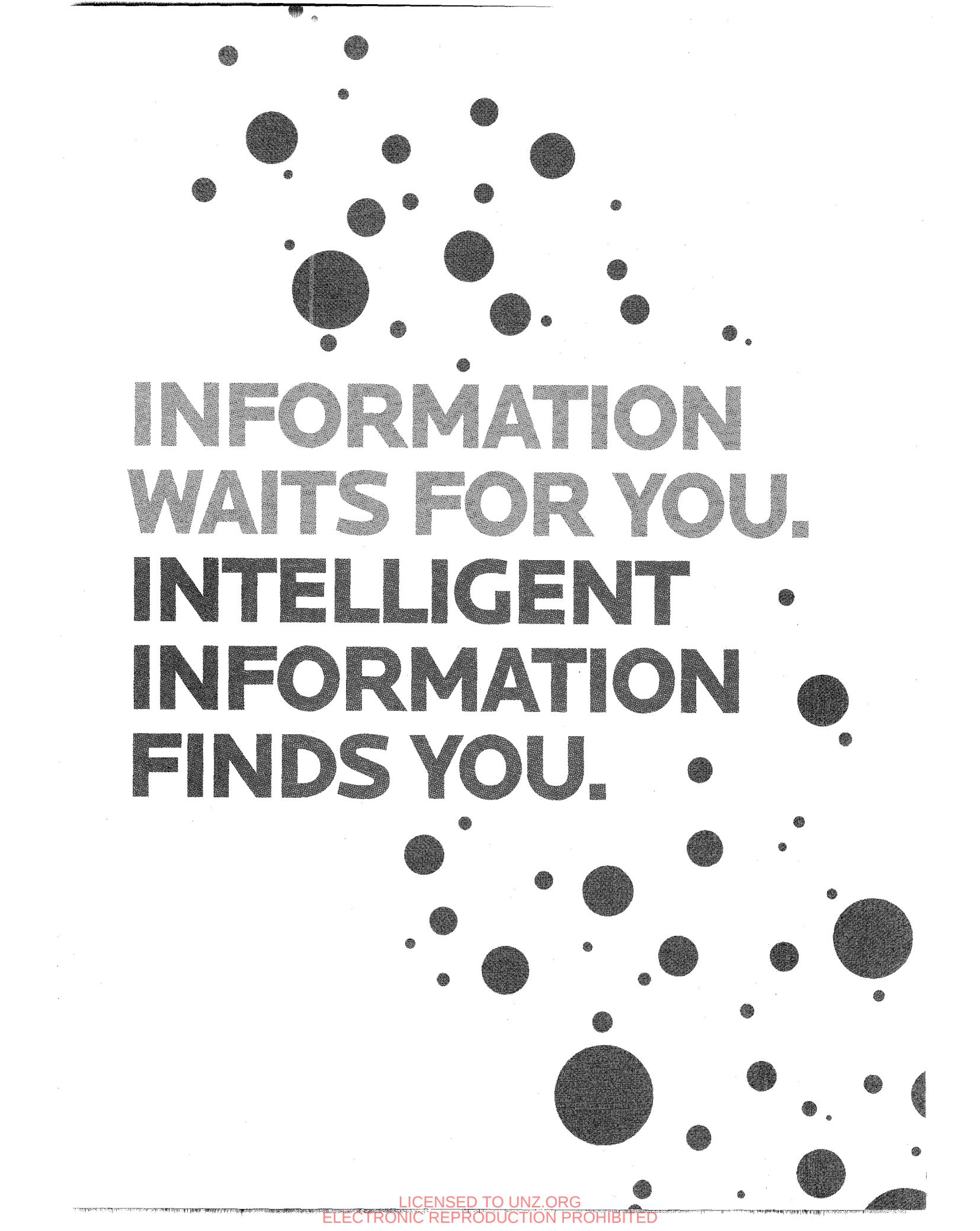
branches of government, regions, and up-and-coming oligarchs—only affirmed the validity of autocratic traditions. Now, with two centers of power forming, the situation is inherently unstable.

Not that Medvedev, whose surname happens to derive from *medved*, or “bear,” looks ready to pick a fight. Slender, soft-spoken, nattily turned out, and two inches shorter than his mentor (who is 5 foot 7), Medvedev would blend in with the financial types sipping their lattes at a Midtown Manhattan Starbucks. Born in 1965 in Leningrad, the only child of a professor and a teacher, Medvedev grew up in a cramped apartment he nevertheless remembers fondly, joined the Komsomol (the Communist Youth), and performed his military service at law school in what amounted to the Soviet ROTC. As did so many young Soviets in the 1980s, he pined after Levi's and Wrangler jeans and Pink Floyd albums. He married his high-school sweetheart, Svetlana, and has a young son. A bright student by most accounts, he received his doctorate in civil law and served as an

assistant professor at his law-school alma mater. In 1991, Anatoly Sobchak, the professor of jurisprudence who became St. Petersburg's first democratically elected mayor, was impressed enough to invite him to join his administration.

At City Hall that year, Medvedev met the person on whom his fate would turn: Putin, the former KGB agent whom Sobchak had hired to run St. Petersburg's external-affairs committee. Putin and Medvedev developed a fraternal relationship, with Putin, at 13 years senior, playing the role of older brother. In 1996, Putin moved to Moscow to head the FSB, the successor agency to the KGB. Three years later, in August 1999, Yeltsin named Putin prime minister. Aging, ailing, often drunk, and damaged by repeated scandals and the country's economic collapse, Yeltsin was looking to leave office in 2000 without facing jail (or the seizure of his assets, to be sure). He appointed Putin as his successor with the understanding, it is believed, that Putin would allow him to retire as “Russia's First President” free from the threat of persecution.

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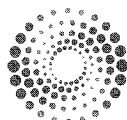
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KNOWLEDGE TO ACT

Putin ran for office in 2000 promising a *diktatura zakona* ("dictatorship of the law") based on the restoration of the Russian state—a winning slogan among a people laid low by a decade of corruption, mafia banditry, and what they saw as humiliation by the West. After running Putin's campaign, Medvedev served as his chief of staff, and soon found himself named chairman of the energy giant Gazprom, Russia's largest company and the supplier of 40 percent of Europe's natural gas—an early sign that Putin might favor him as his successor over other apparently more qualified senior aspirants.

Just before the presidential elections, Medvedev showed a willingness to state the obvious, citing, euphemistically yet

Nikolai Patrushev and Minister of Justice Vladimir Ustinov, who have at their disposal Russia's still-formidable apparatus of espionage, arrest, and punishment. Prevailing over Sechin's group was Medvedev's "liberal" clan, which includes Viktor Cherkesov, chief of the Federal Drug Control Service; Viktor Zolotov, in charge of presidential security; the oligarch Roman Abramovich; and members of the "Family," Yeltsin's old clique.

In an environment of "legal nihilism," Putin cannot be assured of his future should he truly relinquish power. If he were no longer atop the chain of command, he could not protect himself from persecution—especially given the recent shocking allegations in the Western

and the Security Council, and appointer of regional governors. He may impose military law, and he also effectively controls the parastatal energy companies that drive Russia's economy. Most important, the president can (as Yeltsin often did) dismiss the prime minister, who is tasked to serve him.

President Medvedev seems unlikely, at first blush, to fire Prime Minister Putin. After all, Medvedev's choice of replacement would require a majority vote from the Duma, where Putin's party still holds a 70 percent majority. But Medvedev would have the right to do so, and at a moment's notice—which Putin cannot discount. Moreover, power has a way of growing on people as much as people grow into power: witness the transformation of the dour, awkward Putin of 2000, initially hamstrung by the damning legacy of his predecessor, into Russia's paramount political personage and a heavyweight on the international stage.

Will Putin, as prime minister, attempt to enact constitutional reforms that shift power to his office? Given the size, inflexibility, and traditional subservience of the Russian bureaucracy to the head of state—the president—this would be no mean feat. And the constitution does not outlaw a third, nonconsecutive presidential term. Will Medvedev, after a symbolic stint in the Kremlin, voluntarily resign the presidency (or be pushed out), leaving Putin to call for new elections and run for office himself? Might Belarus and Russia, with impetus from Putin, merge, as has long been the plan, thereby forcing fresh elections for the head of the new state? Or will Medvedev simply serve out his time and depart, leaving Putin the chance to return to the Kremlin via the ballot box in 2012? Or could Putin find in his position as prime minister a way to ease himself back into civilian life?

The last two possibilities would certainly be the most salutary for the country. But surprise is the key to survival in Russian politics. Unfortunately for Russia, and the rest of the world, the surprises are rarely pleasant. ▀

Jeffrey Tayler is an Atlantic correspondent.

For many Russians, the chaos of the Yeltsin years only affirmed the validity of autocratic traditions.

tellingly, the "legal nihilism" that is "preventing the country from developing harmoniously." This "legal nihilism"—the disdain so many Russians display for the law—derives in part from the flagrant, Kremlin-sanctioned injustices of the Yeltsin years, in part from centuries-old traditions of predatory, frequently despotic governance. It also stems, paradoxically, from Putin's imposition of authoritarian rule, which he accomplished by emasculating state structures and by appointing to key posts clannish fellow *siloviki* (members of the security services) loyal to him alone. The law of the land has become Putin, or, for most Russians, Putin's underlings and front men, whose dealings are widely known and often despised.

Having amassed considerable power that they could now lose, Putin's *siloviki* must be feeling something other than gratitude toward their boss for choosing Medvedev (who has no ties to them) as his successor. The slighted inner circle includes, most prominently, Igor Sechin, Putin's deputy chief of presidential administration and chairman of Rosneft (Russia's largest oil company). Sechin leads a clan comprising FSB chief

press of a personal fortune in the tens of billions of dollars, including hefty blocks of shares in Russian gas and oil companies. As hard as these allegations would be to prove, they could serve as grounds for investigation and prosecution.

Hence Putin's need for a "liberal" successor to offset the ambitious *siloviki*. If he had anointed a *silovik* with a functioning power base, he might have brought on his own doom. But by orchestrating Medvedev's rise, Putin has outsmarted—and possibly imperiled—all those in Sechin's clan. Moreover, since Medvedev lacks strong personal ties to the security ministries, he can't control the *siloviki* without his mentor's help. Medvedev's very haplessness before the forces that really run Russia makes him the ideal stand-in for a jealous Putin eager to hold on to power.

Or so it would appear. Thanks to the drastic imbalance in power that formally exists between Putin's new post as prime minister and his former position as president, Putin remains vulnerable. The president is head of state, commander in chief, custodian of the nuclear suitcase, director of domestic and foreign policy, master of the security services

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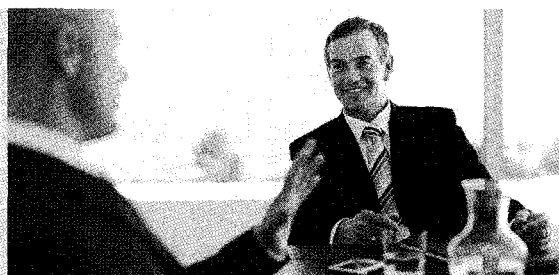
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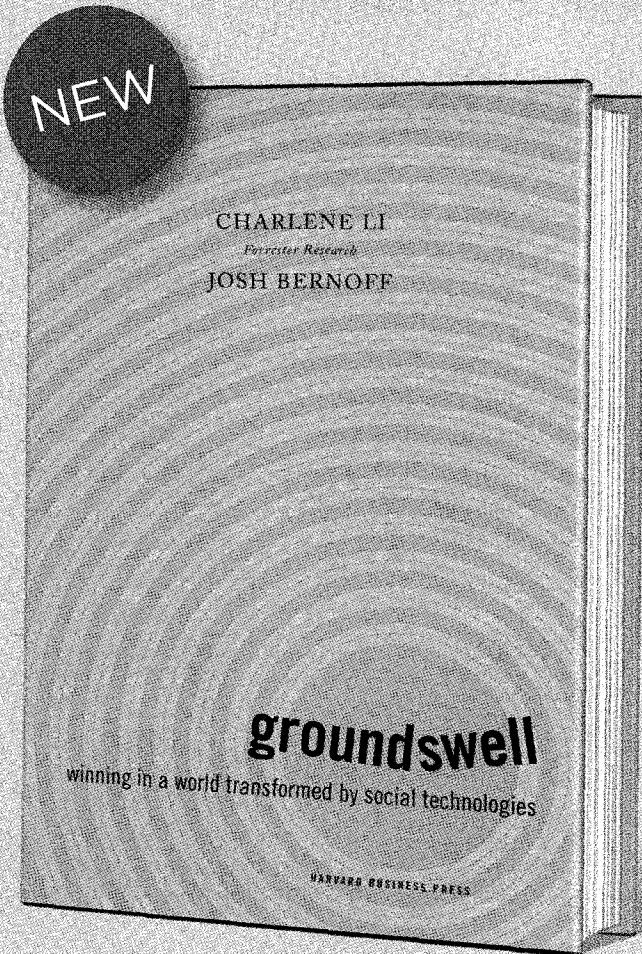
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THE IDEAS ISSUE

THE Atlantic



THE ATLANTIC
(EST. 1857)

To: Atlantic Readers
RE: THINKING

Is there any concept more anodyne and vague at the one extreme, and more powerful at the other, than the idea of ideas? To give some heft and edge to it, we chose to build this, *The Atlantic's* first Ideas Issue, not around speculative experimentation, academic abstraction, or gee-whiz gizmos—cool though they may be—but around real-world attempts to rethink big questions.

So Mark Bowden looks at Rupert Murdoch's ideas for remaking the American newspaper, while Jonathan Rauch examines General Motors' attempt to reinvent itself and the auto industry—by rethinking internal combustion. Robert Kaplan reconsiders Donald Rumsfeld's attempts to transform the military, in the process recasting our image of Rumsfeld himself. Hanna Rosin, investigating a mysterious spike in crime, compels us to think anew about the seeming success of one of the most important antipoverty initiatives of the past 20 years. For his part, Jeffrey Goldberg rethinks himself—undergoing a brain-scanning procedure that marketers are now using to see what motivates us (it turns out that Goldberg is motivated, in part, by Edie Falco).

For this issue, *The Atlantic's* editors and writers also thought back over the past year, distilling the ideas that we believe had the greatest influence. You might think we need to rethink our list; if so, please weigh in with your own big ideas about the past year at theAtlantic.com.

—THE EDITORS

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Why is crime rising in so many American cities?
The answer implicates one of the most celebrated
antipoverty programs of recent decades.

BY HANNA ROSIN

Photographs by Robert King

American Murder

To get to the Old Allen police station in North Memphis, you have to drive all the way to the end of a quiet suburban road until it turns country. Hidden by six acres of woods, the station seems to be the kind of place that might concern itself mainly with lost dogs, or maybe the misuse of hunting licenses. But it isn't. Not anymore. As Lieutenant Doug Barnes waited for me to arrive one night for a tour of his beat, he had a smoke and listened for shots. He counted eight, none meant for buck. "Nothing unusual for a Tuesday," he told me. »

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NEW RESIDENT: Leslie Shaw outside her Springdale Creek apartment in North Memphis

Mystery

Barnes is white, middle-aged, and, like many veteran cops, looks powerful without being fit. He grew up four miles from the station during the 1960s, he said, back when middle-class whites lived peacefully alongside both city elites and working-class African Americans. After the 1968 riots, Barnes's father taught him the word *curfew* and reminded him to lock the doors. Still, the place remained, until about 10 years ago, a pretty safe neighborhood where you could play outside with a ball or a dog. But as he considered more-recent times, his nostalgia gave way to something darker. "I have never been so disheartened," he said.

He remembers when the ground began to shift beneath him. He was working as an investigator throughout the city, looking into homicides and major crimes. Most of his work was downtown. One day in 1997, he got a call to check out a dead car that someone had rolled up onto the

side of the interstate, on the way to the northern suburbs. The car "looked like Swiss cheese," he said, with 40 or 50 bullet holes in it and blood all over the seats. Barnes started investigating. He located one corpse in the woods nearby and another, which had been shoved out a car door, in the parking lot of a hospital a few miles away. He found a neighborhood witness, who gave up everything but the killers' names. Two weeks later, he got another call about an abandoned car. This time the body was inside. "It was my witness," he recalled, "deader than a mackerel."

At this point, he still thought of the stretch of Memphis where he'd grown up as "quiet as all get-out"; the only place you'd see cruisers congregated was in the Safeway parking lot, where churchgoing cops held choir practice before going out for drinks. But by 2000, all of that had changed. Once-quiet apartment complexes full of young families "suddenly started turning hot on us." Instead of

the occasional break-in, Barnes was getting calls about armed robberies, gunshots in the hallways, drug dealers roughing up their neighbors. A gang war ripped through the neighborhood. "We thought, *What the hell is going on here?*" A gang war! In North Memphis! "All of a sudden it was a damn war zone," he said.

As we drove around his beat, this new suburban warfare was not so easy to make out. We passed by the city zoo and Rhodes College, a serene-looking campus on a hill. We passed by plenty of quiet streets lined with ranch houses, not fancy but not falling down, either. Then Barnes began to narrate, street by street, getting more animated and bitter by the block.

Here was the perfectly pleasant-looking Maplewood Avenue, where the old azaleas were just starting to bloom and the local cops were trying to weed out the Chicago drug connection. Farther down the avenue, two households flew American flags, and a third was known for manufacturing "cheese," a particularly potent form of powdered heroin. The Hollywood branch of the local library, long famous for its children's room, was now also renowned for the time thugs stole \$1,800 there from a Girl Scout who'd been collecting cookie funds. Finally we came to a tidy brick complex called Goodwill Village, where Barnes had recently chased down some gang members who'd been taking turns having sex with a new female recruit. As we closed in on midnight, Barnes's beat began to feel like the setting of a David Lynch movie, where every backyard and cul-de-sac could double as a place to hide a body. Or like a suburban remake of *Taxi Driver*, with Barnes as the new Travis Bickle. "I'm like a zookeeper now," said Barnes. "I hold the key, and my job right now is to protect the people from all the animals."

On September 27, 2007, a headline in *The Commercial Appeal*, the city's biggest newspaper, announced a dubious honor: "Memphis Leads U.S. in Violent Crime." Local precincts had been seeing their internal numbers for homicide, rape, aggravated assault, and robbery tick up since the late 1990s, starting around the time Barnes saw the first dead car. By 2005, a criminologist closely tracking those numbers was describing the pattern as a crime explosion. In May of 2007, a woman from upscale Chickasaw Gardens was raped by two men, at gunpoint; the assailants had followed her and her son home one afternoon. Outraged residents formed Citizens Against Crime and lobbied the statehouse for tougher gun laws. "People are concerned for their lives, frankly," said one county commissioner, summarizing the city's mood. This March, a man murdered six people, including two young children, in a house a few miles south of Old Allen Station.

Falling crime rates have been one of the great American success stories of the past 15 years. New York and Los Angeles, once the twin capitals of violent crime, have calmed down significantly, as have most other big cities.

Criminologists still debate why: the crack war petered out, new policing tactics worked, the economy improved for a long spell. Whatever the alchemy, crime in New York, for instance, is now so low that local prison guards are worried about unemployment.

Lately, though, a new and unexpected pattern has emerged, taking criminologists by surprise. While crime rates in large cities stayed flat, homicide rates in many midsize cities (with populations of between 500,000 and 1 million) began increasing, sometimes by as much as 20 percent a year. In 2006, the Police Executive Research Forum, a national police group surveying cities from coast to coast, concluded in a report called "A Gathering Storm" that this might represent "the front end ... of an epidemic of violence not seen for years." The leaders of the group, which is made up of police chiefs and sheriffs, theorized about what might be spurring the latest crime wave: the spread of gangs, the masses of offenders coming out of prison, methamphetamines. But mostly they puzzled over the bleak new landscape. According to FBI data, America's most dangerous spots are now places where Martin Scorsese would never think of staging a shoot-out—Florence, South Carolina; Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina; Kansas City, Missouri; Reading, Pennsylvania; Orlando, Florida; Memphis, Tennessee.

Memphis has always been associated with some amount of violence. But why has Elvis's hometown turned into America's new South Bronx? Barnes thinks he knows one big part of the answer, as does the city's chief of police. A handful of local criminologists and social scientists think they can explain it, too. But it's a dismal answer, one that city leaders have made clear they don't want to hear. It's an answer that offers up racial stereotypes to fearful whites in a city trying to move beyond racial tensions. Ultimately, it reaches beyond crime and implicates one of the most ambitious antipoverty programs of recent decades.

Early every Thursday, Richard Janikowski drives to Memphis's Airways Station for the morning meeting of police precinct commanders. Janikowski used to teach law and semiotics, and he still sometimes floats on a higher plane; he walks slowly, speaks in a nasal voice, and quotes from policy books. But at this point in his career, he is basically an honorary cop. A criminologist with the University of Memphis, Janikowski has established an unusually close relationship with the city police department. From the police chief to the beat cop, everyone knows him as "Dr. J," or "GQ" if he's wearing his nice suit. When his researchers are looking for him, they can often find him outside the building, having a smoke with someone in uniform.

One Thursday in March, I sat in on the morning meeting. About 100 people—commanders, beat cops,



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researchers, and a city councilman—gathered in a sterile conference room with a projector up front. The session had none of the raucous air of precinct meetings you see on cop shows. Nobody was making crude jokes or bragging about the latest run-in with the hood rats.

One by one, the precinct commanders presented crime and arrest statistics in their wards. They broke the information down into neat bar graphs—type of crime, four-week comparison, shifting hot spots. Thanks to Janikowski's influence, the commanders sounded more like policy wonks than police. "It used to be the criminal element was more confined," said Larry Godwin, the police chief. "Now it's all spread out. They might hit one area today and another tomorrow. We have to take a sophisticated look on a daily, hourly basis, or we might never get leverage on it." For a police department facing a volatile situation, the bar graphs imposed some semblance of order.

Janikowski began working with the police department in 1997, the same year that Barnes saw the car with the bullet holes. He initially consulted on a program to reduce

Janikowski might not have managed to pinpoint the cause of this pattern if he hadn't been married to Phyllis Betts, a housing expert at the University of Memphis. Betts and Janikowski have two dogs, three cats, and no kids; they both tend to bring their work home with them. Betts had been evaluating the impact of one of the city government's most ambitious initiatives: the demolition of the city's public-housing projects, as part of a nationwide experiment to free the poor from the destructive effects of concentrated poverty. Memphis demolished its first project in 1997. The city gave former residents federal "Section 8" rent-subsidy vouchers and encouraged them to move out to new neighborhoods. Two more waves of demolition followed over the next nine years, dispersing tens of thousands of poor people into the wider metro community.

If police departments are usually stingy with their information, housing departments are even more so. Getting addresses of Section 8 holders is difficult, because the departments want to protect the residents' privacy. Betts, however, helps the city track where the former residents

America's most dangerous spots are now places where Martin Scorsese would never think of staging a shoot-out.

sexual assaults citywide and quickly made himself useful. He mapped all the incidents and noticed a pattern: many assaults happened outside convenience stores, to women using pay phones that were hidden from view. The police asked store owners to move the phones inside, and the number of assaults fell significantly.

About five years ago, Janikowski embarked on a more ambitious project. He'd built up enough trust with the police to get them to send him daily crime and arrest reports, including addresses and types of crime. He began mapping all violent and property crimes, block by block, across the city. "These cops on the streets were saying that crime patterns are changing," he said, so he wanted to look into it.

When his map was complete, a clear if strangely shaped pattern emerged: *Wait a minute*, he recalled thinking. *I see this bunny rabbit coming up. People are going to accuse me of being on shrooms!* The inner city, where crime used to be concentrated, was now clean. But everywhere else looked much worse: arrests had skyrocketed along two corridors north and west of the central city (the bunny rabbit's ears) and along one in the southeast (the tail). Hot spots had proliferated since the mid-1990s, and little islands of crime had sprung up where none had existed before, dotting the map all around the city.

of public housing have moved. Over time, she and Janikowski realized that they were doing their fieldwork in the same neighborhoods.

About six months ago, they decided to put a hunch to the test. Janikowski merged his computer map of crime patterns with Betts's map of Section 8 rentals. Where Janikowski saw a bunny rabbit, Betts saw a sideways horseshoe ("He has a better imagination," she said). Otherwise, the match was near-perfect. On the merged map, dense violent-crime areas are shaded dark blue, and Section 8 addresses are represented by little red dots. All of the dark-blue areas are covered in little red dots, like bursts of gunfire. The rest of the city has almost no dots.

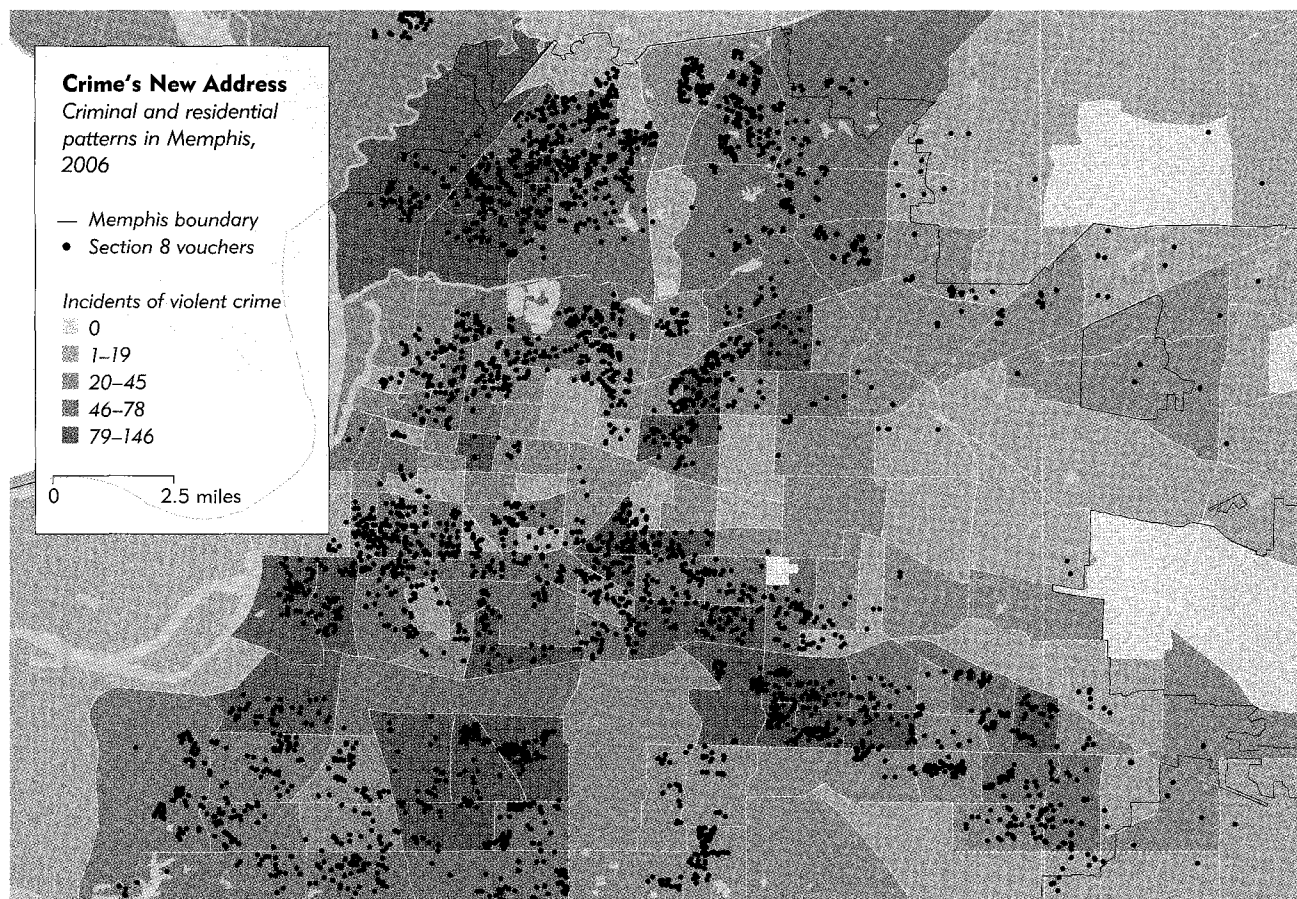
Betts remembers her discomfort as she looked at the map. The couple had been musing about the connection for months, but they were amazed—and deflated—to see how perfectly the two data sets fit together. She knew right away that this would be a "hard thing to say or write." Nobody in the antipoverty community and nobody in city leadership was going to welcome the news that the noble experiment that they'd been engaged in for the past decade had been bringing the city down, in ways they'd never expected. But the connection was too obvious to ignore, and Betts and Janikowski figured that the same thing must be happening all around the country. Eventually,



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they thought, they'd find other researchers who connected the dots the way they had, and then maybe they could get city leaders, and even national leaders, to listen.

Betts's office is filled with books about knocking down the projects, an effort considered by fellow housing experts to be their great contribution to the civil-rights movement. The work grew out of a long history of white resistance to blacks' moving out of what used to be called the ghetto. During much of the 20th century, white people used bombs and mobs to keep black people out of their neighborhoods. In 1949 in Chicago, a rumor that a black family was moving onto a white block prompted a riot that grew to 10,000 people in four days. "Americans had been treating blacks seeking housing outside the ghetto not much better than ... [the] cook treated the dog who sought a crust of bread," wrote the ACLU lawyer and fair-housing advocate Alexander Polikoff in his book *Waiting for Gautreaux*.

Polikoff is a hero to Betts and many of her colleagues. In August 1966, he filed two related class-action suits against the Chicago Housing Authority and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, on behalf of a woman named Dorothy Gautreaux and other tenants. Gautreaux wanted to leave the ghetto, but the

CHA offered housing only in neighborhoods just like hers. Polikoff became notorious in the Chicago suburbs; one community group, he wrote, awarded him a gold-plated pooper-scooper "to clean up all the shit" he wanted to bring into the neighborhood. A decade later, he argued the case before the Supreme Court and won. Legal scholars today often compare the case's significance to that of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*.

In 1976, letters went out to 200 randomly selected families among the 44,000 living in Chicago public housing, asking whether they wanted to move out to the suburbs. A counselor went around the projects explaining the new Section 8 program, in which tenants would pay 25 percent of their income for rent and the government would pay the rest, up to a certain limit. Many residents seemed dubious. They asked how far away these places were, how they would get there, whether the white people would let them in.

But the counselors persevered and eventually got people excited about the idea. The flyers they mailed out featured a few stanzas of a Gwendolyn Brooks poem, "The Ballad of Rudolph Reed."

I am not hungry for berries
I am not hungry for bread

But hungry hungry for a house
Where at night a man in bed
May never hear the plaster
Stir as if in pain.
May never hear the roaches
Falling like fat rain.

(This was a risky decision. One later stanza, omitted from the flyers, reads:

By the time he had hurt his fourth white man
Rudolph Reed was dead.
His neighbors gathered and kicked his corpse
“Nigger—” his neighbors said.)

Starting in 1977, in what became known as the Gautreaux program, hundreds of families relocated to suburban neighborhoods—most of them about 25 miles from the ghetto, with very low poverty rates and good public schools. The authorities had screened the families carefully, inspecting their apartments and checking for good credit histories. They didn’t offer the vouchers to families with more than five children, or to those that were indifferent to leaving the projects. They were looking for families “seeking a healthy environment, good schools and an opportunity to live in a safe and decent home.”

A well-known Gautreaux study, released in 1991, showed spectacular results. The sociologist James Rosenbaum at Northwestern University had followed 114 families who had moved to the suburbs, although only 68 were still cooperating by the time he released the study. Compared to former public-housing residents who’d stayed within the city, the suburban dwellers were four times as likely to finish high school, twice as likely to attend college, and more likely to be employed. *Newsweek* called the program “stunning” and said the project renewed “one’s faith in the struggle.” In a glowing segment, a *60 Minutes* reporter asked one Gautreaux boy what he wanted to be when he grew up. “I haven’t really made up my mind,” the boy said. “Construction worker, architect, anesthesiologist.” Another child’s mother declared it “the end of poverty” for her family.

In 1992, 7-year-old Dantrell Davis from the Cabrini-Green project was walking to school, holding his mother’s hand, when a stray bullet killed him. The hand-holding detail seemed to stir the city in a way that none of the other murder stories coming out of the high-rises ever had. “Tear down the high rises,” demanded an editorial in the *Chicago Tribune*, while that boy’s image “burns in our civic memory.”

HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros was receptive to the idea. He spent a few nights in Chicago’s infamous Robert Taylor Homes and subsequently spoke about “these enclaves of poverty,” where “drug dealers control the

stairwells, where children can’t go outside to play, where mothers put their infants to bed in bathtubs.” If people could see beyond the graffitied hallways of these projects, they could get above that way of life, argued the researchers, and learn to live like their middle-class brothers and sisters. Cisneros floated the idea of knocking down the projects and moving the residents out into the metro area.

The federal government encouraged the demolitions with a \$6.3 billion program to redevelop the old project sites, called HOPE VI, or “Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere.” The program was launched in the same spirit as Bill Clinton’s national service initiative—communities working together to “rebuild lives.” One Chicago housing official mused about “architects and lawyers and bus drivers and people on welfare living together.” Wrecking balls began hitting the Chicago high-rises in the mid-1990s. Within a few years, tens of thousands of public-housing residents all over the country were leaving their apartments. In place of the projects, new developments arose, with fanciful names like “Jazz on the Boulevard” or “Centennial Place.” In Memphis, the Hurt Village project was razed to make way for “Uptown Square,” which the local developer Henry Turley declared would be proof that you could turn the inner city into a “nice place for poor people” to live. Robert Lipscomb, the dynamic director of the Memphis Housing Authority, announced, “Memphis is on the move.”

When the Dixie Homes housing project was demolished, in 2006, a group of residents moved to a place called Springdale Creek Apartments in North Memphis, on Doug Barnes’s beat. They were not handpicked, nor part of any study, and nobody told them to move to a low-poverty neighborhood. Like tens of thousands of others, they moved because they had to, into a place they could afford. Springdale Creek is not fancy, but the complex tries to enforce its own quiet order. A sliding black gate separates the row of brick buildings from busy Jackson Avenue, where kids hang out by the KFC. Leslie Shaw was sold when she heard the phrase *gated community* mentioned by the building manager.

When Shaw saw the newly painted white walls, “so fresh and clean,” with no old smudges from somebody else’s kids, she decided to give away all her furniture. “I didn’t want to move in here with any garbage from Dixie,” she said. “I said to myself, ‘Might as well start over.’” She bought a new brown velour couch and a matching loveseat. She bought a washer and dryer, and a dresser for her 8-year-old grandson, Gerrell, who lives with her. The only thing she kept was a bookshelf, to hold the paperbacks coming monthly from the book club she’d decided to join.

Shaw is 11 years crack-free and, at 47, eager to take advantage of every free program that comes her way—a leadership class, Windows Vista training, a citizen police course, a writing workshop. What drove her—“I got to be

honest with you”—was proving her middle-class sisters and brother, “who didn’t think I’d get above it,” wrong. Just after she moved in, one sister came over and said, “This is nice. I thought they would put you back in the projects or something.”

I visited Shaw in February, about a year and a half after she’d moved in. The view outside her first-floor window was still pretty nice—no junk littered the front lawn and few apartments stood vacant. But slowly, she told me, Springdale Creek has started to feel less like a suburban paradise and more like Dixie Homes. Neighborhood boys often kick open the gate or break the keypad. Many nights they just randomly press phone numbers until someone lets them in. The gate’s main use seems to be as a sort of low-thrills ride for younger kids whose parents aren’t paying attention. They hang from the gate as it slides open; a few have gotten their fingers caught and had to be taken to the emergency room.

When Shaw recounts all the bad things that have happened at Springdale Creek, she does it matter-of-factly

“There’s 10 of them! And I’m gonna go fuck them up! That’s my grandson! They took him away in an ambulance!”

Nobody in the house got excited. They kept their eyes on Maury Povich, where the audience was booing a kid who looked just like the thug who’d shot up his girlfriend’s car. “She’ll calm down,” someone said, and after a few minutes, Clark left. I drove down to Northside High, a few blocks away, where the grandson had gotten beaten up. TV crews and local reporters were already gathered outside the school, and a news chopper hovered overhead. There had been two school shootings in the neighborhood that month, and any fresh incidents made big news.

Clark’s grandson is named Unique, although everyone calls him Neek. Outside school that day, Neek had been a victim of one of the many strange dynamics of the new urban suburbia. Neek is tall and quiet and doesn’t rush to change out of his white polo shirt and blue khakis after school. He spends most of his afternoons in the house, watching TV or doing his homework.

“I’m a zookeeper now,” said Barnes. “I hold the key, and my job is to protect the people from the animals.”

(even as a grandma, she says, “I can jump those boys if I have to”). Car thefts were common at first—Shaw’s neighbor Laura Evans is one of about 10 victims in the past two years. Thieves have relieved the apartment management company of some of its computers, extra refrigerators, and spare stoves. A few Dixie boys—sons of one of Shaw’s friends—were suspected of breaking the windows in vacant apartments. Last year, somebody hit a pregnant woman in the head with a brick. In the summer, a neighborhood kid chased his girlfriend’s car, shooting at her as she drove toward the gate; the cops, who are called in regularly for one reason or another, collected the spent shells on the grass. “You know, you move from one place to another and you bring the element with you,” said Evans, who stopped by Shaw’s apartment while I was there. “You got some trying to make it just like the projects.”

In the afternoon, I visited an older resident from Dixie Homes who lives across the way from Shaw. Her apartment was dark, blinds drawn, and everyone was watching Maury Povich. A few minutes after I arrived, we heard a pounding at the door, and a neighbor rushed in, shouting.

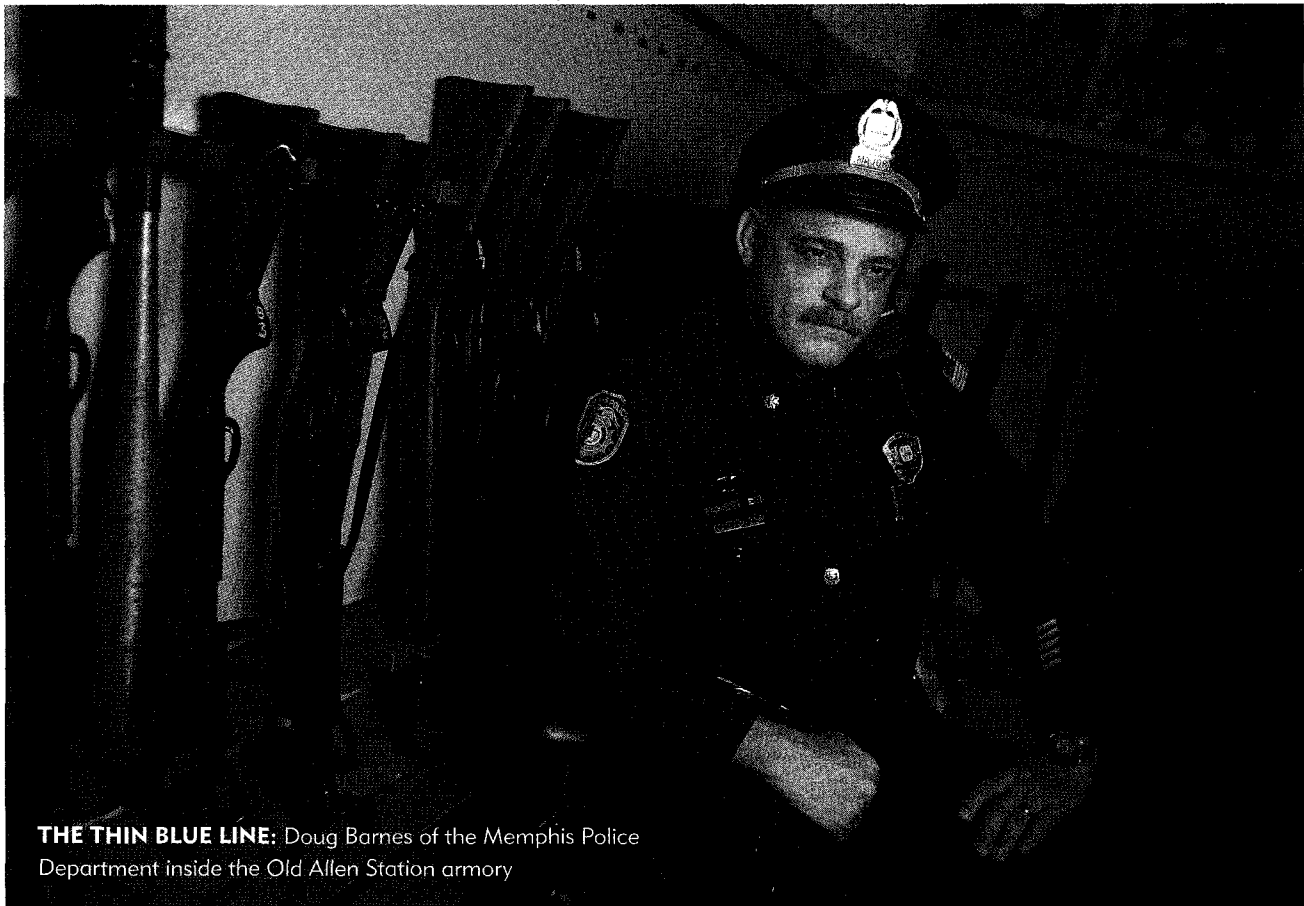
“They just jumped my grandson! That’s my grandson!”

This was 64-year-old Nadine Clark, who’d left Dixie before it got knocked down. Clark was wearing her navy peacoat, but she had forgotten to put in her teeth. From her pocket she pulled a .38-caliber pistol, which was the only thing that glinted in the room besides the TV.

Neek’s middle-class habits have made him, unwittingly, a perfect target for homegrown gangs. Gang leaders, cut loose from the housing projects, have adapted their recruiting efforts and operations to their new setting. Lately, they’ve been going after “smart, intelligent, go-to-college-looking kid[s], without gold teeth and medallions,” said Sergeant Lambert Ross, an investigator with the Memphis Police. Clean-cut kids serve the same function as American recruits for al-Qaeda: they become the respectable front men. If a gang member gets pulled over with guns or drugs, he can hand them to the college boy, who has no prior record. The college boy, raised outside the projects, might be dreaming of being the next 50 Cent, or might be too intimidated not to join. Ross told me that his latest batch of arrests involved several kids from two-car-garage families.

Neek generally stayed away from gang types, so some older kids beat him with bats. No one is sure whether a gun was fired. As these things go, he got off easy. He was treated at the emergency room and went back to school after a few days.

In the most literal sense, the national effort to diffuse poverty has succeeded. Since 1990, the number of Americans living in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty—meaning that at least 40 percent of households are below the federal poverty level—has declined by



THE THIN BLUE LINE: Doug Barnes of the Memphis Police Department inside the Old Allen Station armory

24 percent. But this doesn't tell the whole story. Recently, the housing expert George Galster, of Wayne State University, analyzed the shifts in urban poverty and published his results in a paper called "A Cautionary Tale." While fewer Americans live in high-poverty neighborhoods, increasing numbers now live in places with "moderate" poverty rates, meaning rates of 20 to 40 percent. This pattern is not necessarily better, either for poor people trying to break away from bad neighborhoods or for cities, Galster explains. His paper compares two scenarios: a city split into high-poverty and low-poverty areas, and a city dominated by median-poverty ones. The latter arrangement is likely to produce more bad neighborhoods and more total crime, he concludes, based on a computer model of how social dysfunction spreads.

Studies show that recipients of Section 8 vouchers have tended to choose moderately poor neighborhoods that were already on the decline, not low-poverty neighborhoods. One recent study publicized by HUD warned that policy makers should lower their expectations, because voucher recipients seemed not to be spreading out, as they had hoped, but clustering together. Galster theorizes that every neighborhood has its tipping point—a threshold well below a 40 percent poverty rate—beyond which crime explodes and other severe social problems

set in. Pushing a greater number of neighborhoods past that tipping point is likely to produce more total crime. In 2003, the Brookings Institution published a list of the 15 cities where the number of high-poverty neighborhoods had declined the most. In recent years, most of those cities have also shown up as among the most violent in the U.S., according to FBI data.

The "Gathering Storm" report that worried over an upcoming epidemic of violence was inspired by a call from the police chief of Louisville, Kentucky, who'd seen crime rising regionally and wondered what was going on. Simultaneously, the University of Louisville criminologist Geetha Suresh was tracking local patterns of violent crime. She had begun her work years before, going blind into the research: she had just arrived from India, had never heard of a housing project, had no idea which were the bad parts of town, and was clueless about the finer points of American racial sensitivities. In her research, Suresh noticed a recurring pattern, one that emerged first in the late 1990s, then again around 2002. A particularly violent neighborhood would suddenly go cold, and crime would heat up in several new neighborhoods. In each case, Suresh has now confirmed, the first hot spots were the neighborhoods around huge housing projects, and the later ones were places where people had moved when

the projects were torn down. From that, she drew the obvious conclusion: "Crime is going along with them." Except for being hand-drawn, Suresh's map matching housing patterns with crime looks exactly like Janikowski and Betts's.

Nobody would claim vouchers, or any single factor, as the sole cause of rising crime. Crime did not rise in every city where housing projects came down. In cities where it did, many factors contributed: unemployment, gangs, rapid gentrification that dislocated tens of thousands of poor people not living in the projects. Still, researchers around the country are seeing the same basic pattern: projects coming down in inner cities and crime pushing outward, in many cases destabilizing cities or their surrounding areas. Dennis Rosenbaum, a criminologist at the University of Illinois at Chicago, told me that after the high-rises came down in Chicago, suburbs to the south and west—including formerly quiet ones—began to see spikes in crime; nearby Maywood's murder rate has nearly doubled in the past two years. In Atlanta, which almost always makes the top-10 crime list, crime is now scattered widely, just as it is in Memphis and Louisville.

connections and to develop "comfort zones," Janikowski told me.) But in 2005, another wave of project demolitions pushed the number of people displaced from public housing to well over 20,000, and crime skyrocketed. Janikowski felt there were deep structural issues behind the increase, ones that the city was not prepared to handle. Old gangs—the Gangster Disciples and the LeMoyne Gardens gang—had long since re-formed and gotten comfortable. Ex-convicts recently released from prison had taken up residence with girlfriends or wives or families who'd moved to the new neighborhoods. Working-class people had begun moving out to the suburbs farther east, and more recipients of Section 8 vouchers were taking their place. Now many neighborhoods were reaching their tipping points.

Chaotic new crime patterns in suburbia caught the police off guard. Gang members who'd moved to North Memphis might now have cousins southeast of the city, allowing them to target the whole vast area in between and hide out with relatives far from the scene of the crime. Memphis covers an area as large as New York City, but with one-seventeenth as many police officers, and a much lower cop-to-citizen ratio. And routine policing is more

'Was this a bad theory of poverty? Have we underestimated the role of support networks and overestimated the role of place?'

In some places, the phenomenon is hard to detect, but there may be a simple reason: in cities with tight housing markets, Section 8 recipients generally can't afford to live within the city limits, and sometimes they even move to different states. New York, where the rate of violent crime has plummeted, appears to have pushed many of its poor out to New Jersey, where violent crime has increased in nearby cities and suburbs. Washington, D.C., has exported some of its crime to surrounding counties in Maryland and Virginia.

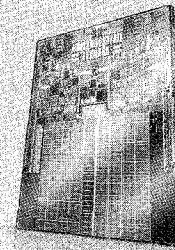
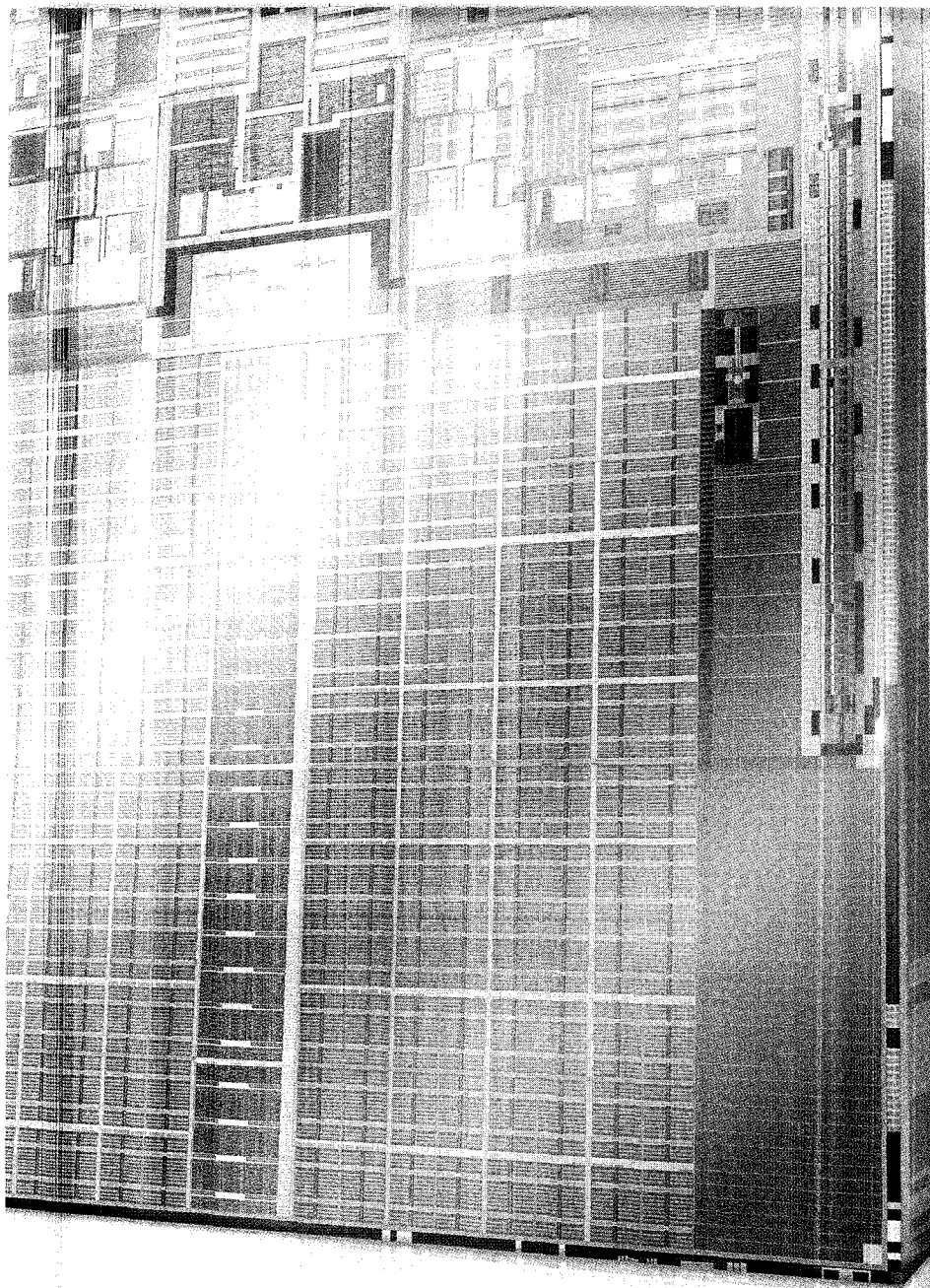
Much research has been done on the spread of gangs into the suburbs. Jeff Rojek, a criminologist at the University of South Carolina, issued a report in 2006 showing that serious gang activity had spread to eight suburban counties around the state, including Florence County, home to the city of Florence, which was ranked the most violent place in America the year after Memphis was. In his fieldwork, he said, the police complained of "migrant gangs" from the housing projects, and many departments seemed wholly unprepared to respond.

After the first wave of housing-project demolition in Memphis, in 1997, crime spread out, but did not immediately increase. (It takes time for criminals to make new

difficult in the semi-suburbs. Dealers sell out of fenced-in backyards, not on exposed street corners. They have cars to escape in, and a landscape to blend into. Shrubbery is a constant headache for the police; they've taken to asking that bushes be cut down so suspects can't duck behind them.

I began reporting this story because I came across a newspaper article that ranked cities by crime rate and I was surprised to see Memphis at the very top. At first I approached the story literally, the same way a cop on a murder case would: here's the body, now figure out what happened. But it didn't take long to realize that in Memphis, and in city after city, the bodies are just the most visible symptoms of a much deeper sickness.

If replacing housing projects with vouchers had achieved its main goal—infusing the poor with middle-class habits—then higher crime rates might be a price worth paying. But today, social scientists looking back on the whole grand experiment are apt to use words like *baffling* and *disappointing*. A large federal-government study conducted over the past decade—a follow-up to the highly positive, highly publicized Gautreaux study



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of 1991—produced results that were “puzzling,” said Susan Popkin of the Urban Institute. In this study, volunteers were also moved into low-poverty neighborhoods, although they didn’t move nearly as far as the Gautreaux families. Women reported lower levels of obesity and depression. But they were no more likely to find jobs. The schools were not much better, and children were no more likely to stay in them. Girls were less likely to engage in risky behaviors, and they reported feeling more secure in their new neighborhoods. But boys were as likely to do drugs and act out, and more likely to get arrested for property crimes. The best Popkin can say is: “It has not lived up to its promise. It has not lifted people out of poverty, it has not made them self-sufficient, and it has left a lot of people behind.”

Researchers have started to look more critically at the Gautreaux results. The sample was tiny, and the circumstances were ideal. The families who moved to the suburbs were screened heavily and the vast majority of families who participated in the program didn’t end up moving, suggesting that those who did were particularly motivated. Even so, the results were not always sparkling. For instance, while Gautreaux study families who had moved to the suburbs were more likely to work than a control group who stayed in the city, they actually worked less than before they had moved. “People were really excited about it because it seemed to offer something new,” Popkin said. “But in my view, it was radically oversold.”

Ed Goetz, a housing expert at the University of Minnesota, is creating a database of the follow-up research at different sites across the country, “to make sense of these very limited positive outcomes.” On the whole, he says, people don’t consistently report any health, education, or employment benefits. They are certainly no closer to leaving poverty. They tend to “feel better about their environments,” meaning they see less graffiti on the walls and fewer dealers on the streets. But just as strongly, they feel “a sense of isolation in their new communities.” His most surprising finding, he says, “is that they miss the old community. For all of its faults, there was a tight network that existed. So what I’m trying to figure out is: Was this a bad theory of poverty? We were intending to help people climb out of poverty, but that hasn’t happened at all. Have we underestimated the role of support networks and overestimated the role of place?”

HOPE VI stands as a bitter footnote to this story. What began as an “I Have a Dream” social crusade has turned into an urban-redevelopment project. Cities fell so hard for the idea of a new, spiffed-up, gentrified downtown that this vision came to crowd out other goals. “People ask me if HOPE VI was successful, and I have to say, ‘You mean the buildings or the people?’” said Laura Harris, a HOPE VI evaluator in Memphis. “It became seen as a way to get rid of eyesores and attract rich people downtown.”

Phyllis Betts told me that when she was interviewing residents leaving the housing projects, “they were under the impression they could move into the new developments on site.” Residents were asked to help name the new developments and consult on the architectural plans. Yet to move back in, residents had to meet strict criteria: if they were not seniors, they had to be working, or in school, or on disability. Their children could not be delinquent in school. Most public-housing residents were scared off by the criteria, or couldn’t meet them, or else they’d already moved and didn’t want to move again. The new HOPE VI developments aimed to balance Section 8 and market-rate residents, but this generally hasn’t happened. In Memphis, the rate of former public-housing residents moving back in is 5 percent.

A few months ago, Harris went to a Sunday-afternoon picnic at Uptown Square, the development built on the site of the old Hurt Village project, to conduct a survey. The picnic’s theme was chili cook-off. The white people, mostly young couples, including little kids and pregnant wives, sat around on Eddie Bauer chairs with beer holders, chatting. The black people, mostly women with children, were standing awkwardly around the edges. Harris began asking some of the white people the questions on her survey: Do you lack health insurance? Have you ever not had enough money to buy medication? One said to her, “This is so sad. Does anyone ever answer ‘yes’ to these questions?”—Harris’s first clue that neighbors didn’t talk much across color lines. One of the developers was there that day surveying the ideal community he’d built, and he was beaming. “Isn’t this great?” he asked Harris, and she remembers thinking, *Are you kidding me? They’re all sitting 20 feet away from each other!*

In my visits with former Dixie Homes tenants who’d moved around the city, I came across the same mix of reactions that researchers had found. The residents who had always been intent on moving out of Dixie Homes anyway seemed to be thriving; those who’d been pushed out against their will, which was the vast majority, seemed dislocated and ill at ease.

I met 30-year-old Sheniqua Woodard, a single mother of three who’d been getting her four-year degree while living at Dixie. She was now working at a city mental-health clinic and about to start studying toward a master’s degree in special education. She’d moved as far out of the city as she could, to a house with a big backyard. She said, “The fact of being in my own home? Priceless.”

But I also met La Sasha Rodgers, who was 19 when Dixie was torn down (now she’s 21). “A lot of people thought it was bad, because they didn’t live there,” she told me. “But it was like one big family. It felt like home. If I could move back now, the way it was, I would.” She moved out to a house in South Memphis with her mother, and all the little cousins and nieces and nephews who drift in

during the day. She doesn't know anyone else on the block. "It's just here," she said about her new house. Rodgers may not see them right out her window, but she knows that the "same dope dealers, the same junkies" are just down the block. The threats are no less real, but now they seem distant and dull, as if she were watching neighborhood life on TV. At Dixie, when there were shots at the corner store, everyone ran out to see what was happening. Now, "if somebody got shot, we wouldn't get up to see."

Rodgers didn't finish high school, although she did get her GED, and she's never had a job. Still, "I know I have to venture out in the world," she said, running through her options: Go back to school? Get a job? Get married? Have a baby? "I want more. I'm so ready to have my own. I just don't know how to get it."

It's difficult to contemplate solutions to this problem when so few politicians, civil servants, and academics seem willing to talk about it—or even to admit that it exists. Janikowski and Betts are in an awkward position. They are both white academics in a city with many African American political leaders. Neither of them is a

on people who have been too burdened already, and to me that's, quote-unquote, criminal." To Lipscomb, what matters is sending people who lived in public housing the message that "they can be successful, they can go to work and have kids who go to school. They can be self-sufficient and reach for the middle class."

But Betts doesn't think this message, alone, will stick, and she gets frustrated when she sees sensitivity about race or class blocking debate. "You can't begin to problem-solve until you lay it out," she said. "Most of us are not living in these high-crime neighborhoods. And I'm out there listening to the people who are not committing the crimes, who expected something better." The victims, she notes, are seldom white. "There are decent African American neighborhoods—neighborhoods of choice—that are going down," she said.

In truth, the victims are constantly shifting. Hardly any Section 8 families moved into wealthy white suburbs. In the early phases, most of the victims were working-class African Americans who saw their neighborhoods destroyed and had to leave. Now most of them are poor people like Leslie Shaw, who are trying to do what

'We can't send people back to those barricaded institutions. That's not a scenario anyone wants to embrace.'

Memphis native. And they know that their research will fuel the usual NIMBY paranoia about poor people destroying the suburbs. "We don't want Memphis to be seen as the armpit of the nation," Betts said. "And we don't want to be the ones responsible for framing these issues in the wrong way."

The city's deep pride about the downtown renaissance makes the issue more sensitive still. CITY, COOL, CHIC read downtown billboards, beckoning young couples to new apartments. Developers have built a new eight-block mall and a downtown stadium for the Grizzlies, the city's NBA team. In 2003, *The Commercial Appeal* likened downtown Memphis to a grizzly bear "rumbling back into the sun." The city is applying to the federal government for more funds to knock down the last two housing projects and build more mixed-income developments, and wouldn't want to advertise any problems.

Earlier this year, Betts presented her findings to city leaders, including Robert Lipscomb, the head of the Memphis Housing Authority. From what Lipscomb said to me, he's still not moved. "You've already marginalized people and told them they have to move out," he told me irritably, just as he's told Betts. "Now you're saying they moved somewhere else and created all these problems? That's a really, really unfair assessment. You're putting a big burden

Lipscomb asks of them and be more self-sufficient. Which makes sorting out the blame even trickier. Sometimes the victim and the perpetrator live under the same roof; Shaw's friend at Springdale Creek wanted a better life for herself and her family, but she couldn't keep her sons from getting into trouble. Sometimes they may be the same person, with conflicting impulses about whether to move forward or go back. In any case, more than a decade's worth of experience proves that crossing your fingers and praying for self-sufficiency is foolish.

So what's the alternative? Is a strained hope better than no hope at all? "We can't send people back to those barricaded institutions, like *Escape From New York*," said Betts. "That's not a scenario anyone wants to embrace." Physically redistributing the poor was probably necessary; generations of them were floundering in the high-rises. But instead of coaching them and then carefully spreading them out among many more-affluent neighborhoods, most cities gave them vouchers and told them to move in a rush, with no support.

"People were moved too quickly, without any planning, and without any thought about where they would live, and how it would affect the families or the places," complains James Rosenbaum, the author of the original Gautreaux study. By contrast, years of public debate preceded

welfare reform. States were forced to acknowledge that if they wanted to cut off benefits, they had to think about job training, child care, broken families. Housing never became a high-profile issue, so cities skipped that phase.

Not every project was like Cabrini-Green. Dixie Homes was a complex of two- and three-story brick buildings on grassy plots. It was, by all accounts, claustrophobic, sometimes badly maintained, and occasionally violent. But to its residents, it was, above all, a community. Every former resident I spoke to mentioned one thing: the annual Easter-egg hunt. Demonizing the high-rises has blinded some city officials to what was good and necessary about the projects, and what they ultimately have to find a way to replace: the sense of belonging, the informal economy, the easy access to social services. And for better or worse, the fact that the police had the address.

Better policing, better-connected to new residential patterns, is a step in the right direction. Janikowski believes the chaos can be controlled with information and technology, and he's been helping the department improve both for several years. This spring he helped launch a "real-time crime center," in the hope of making the department more nimble. Twenty-four hours a day, technicians plot arrests on giant screens representing the city's geography, in a newly built studio reminiscent of CNN's newsroom. *Cops on the dots* is the national buzzword for this kind of information-driven, rapid-response policing, and it has an alluring certainty about it. The changes seem to be making a difference; recent data show violent-crime rates in the city beginning to inch down.

In the long view—both Betts and Janikowski agree—better policing is of course not the only answer. The more fundamental question is the one this social experiment was designed to address in the first place: What to do about deep poverty and persistent social dysfunction?

Betts's latest crusade is something called "site-based resident services." When the projects came down, the residents lost their public-support system—health clinics, child care, job training. Memphis's infant-mortality rate is rising, for example, and Betts is convinced that has something to do with poor people's having lost easy access to prenatal care. The services remained downtown while the clients scattered all over the city, many of them with no convenient transportation. Along with other nonprofit leaders, Betts is trying to get outreach centers opened in the outlying neighborhoods, and especially in some of the new, troubled apartment buildings. She says she's beginning to hear supportive voices within the city government. But not enough leaders have acknowledged the new landscape—or admitted that the projects are gone in name only, and that the city's middle-class dreams never came true.

And beyond this, what? The social services Betts is recommending did not lift masses of people out of poverty in the projects. Perhaps, outside the projects, they will help people a little more. But perhaps not. The problems of poverty run so deep that we're unlikely to know the answer for a generation. Social scientists tracking people who are trying to improve their lives often talk about a "weathering effect," the wearing-down that happens as a lifetime of baggage accumulates. With poor people, the drag is strong, even if they haven't lived in poverty for long. Kids who leave poor neighborhoods at a young age still have trouble keeping up with their peers, studies show. They catch up for a while and then, after a few years, slip back. Truly escaping poverty seems to require a will as strong as a spy's: you have to disappear to a strange land, forget where you came from, and ignore the suspicions of everyone around you. Otherwise, you can easily find yourself right back where you started.

Leslie Shaw is writing a memoir, and it contains more weather than most of us can imagine. At 15, she left home with a boy named Fat, who turned out to be a pimp. She spent the next seven years being dragged from state to state as a street hooker, robbing johns and eventually getting addicted to crack. Once, a pimp locked her in his car trunk. Another time, her water broke in a crack house. This covers only the first few chapters. She works on the memoir endlessly—revising, dividing the material into different files (one is labeled, simply, "Shit"). She still has two big sections to go, and many years of her life left to record. Her next big project is to get this memoir under control, finish it, have it published, and "hope something good can come out of it," for herself and the people who read it.

When I last saw Shaw, in March, she had her plan laid out. About seven months earlier, she had taken in her 2-year-old granddaughter, Casha Mona, for what was supposed to be a temporary stay. The little girl's mother was getting her act together in Albuquerque, where Casha's father (Shaw's son) was in prison. Shaw's plan was to take Casha Mona back to Albuquerque, then begin a writing workshop at the Renaissance Center in Memphis to get her memoir into shape. And just before Easter, she'd dropped Casha off, come home, and signed up for the class. Two days later, she got a call from an aunt in Albuquerque. Casha had swallowed a few crack rocks at her mother's house; state officials had put her in foster care. More weather. Last I spoke to Shaw, she'd bought another round-trip bus ticket to Albuquerque and was going to get the little girl back.

The writing class would have to wait, or she could do it at night, or ... "I'm just going to get on that bus," she said, "and pray." ▀

Hanna Rosin is an Atlantic contributing editor and the author of *God's Harvard: A Christian College on a Mission to Save America* (2007).

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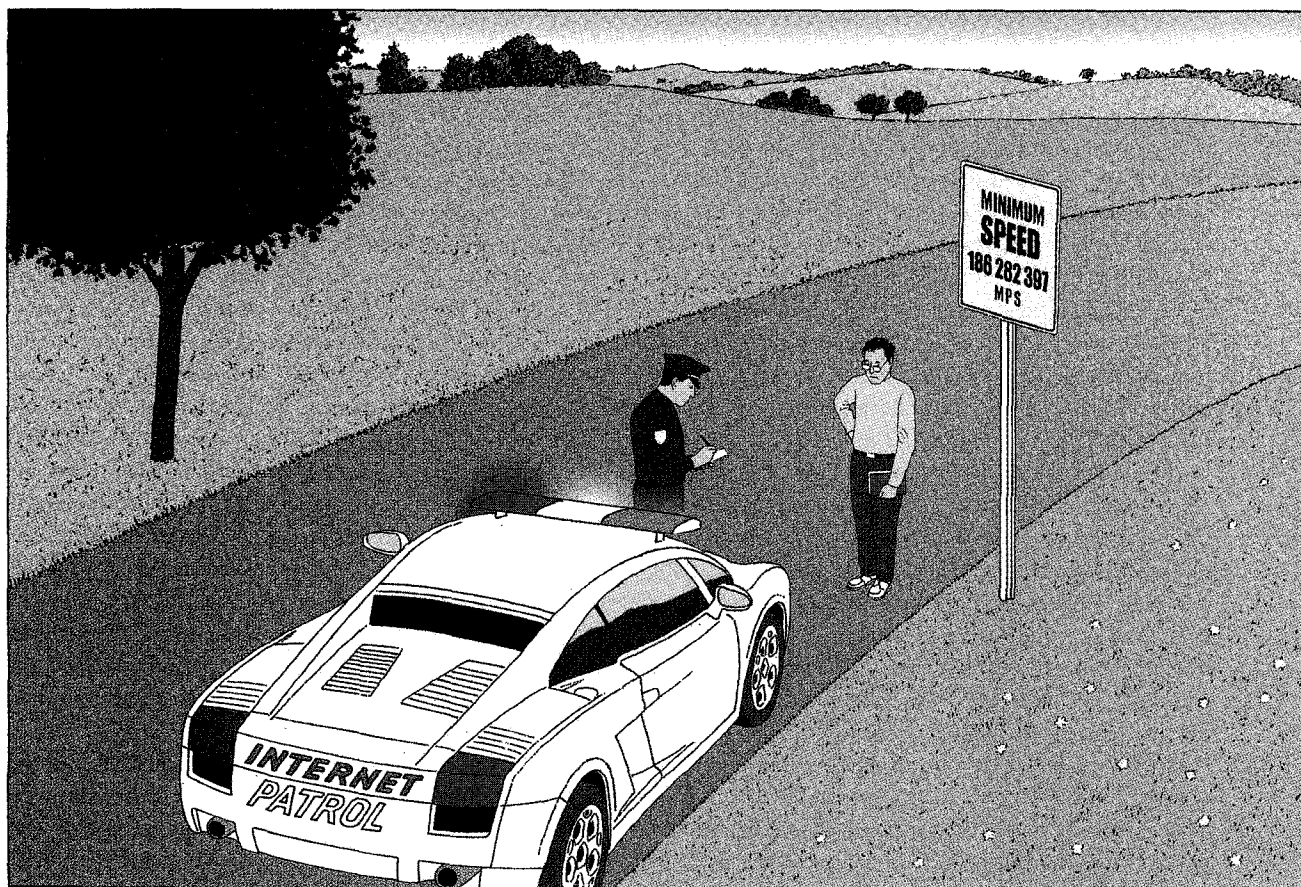
What the Internet is doing to our brains

BY NICHOLAS CARR

Illustration by Guy Billout

Is Google Making Us Stupid?

“Dave, stop. Stop, will you? Stop, Dave. Will you stop, Dave?” So the supercomputer HAL pleads with the implacable astronaut Dave Bowman in a famous and weirdly poignant scene toward the end of Stanley Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Bowman, having nearly been sent to a deep-space death by the malfunctioning machine, is calmly, coldly disconnecting the memory circuits that control its artificial »



brain. "Dave, my mind is going," HAL says, forlornly. "I can feel it. I can feel it."

I can feel it, too. Over the past few years I've had an uncomfortable sense that someone, or something, has been tinkering with my brain, remapping the neural circuitry, reprogramming the memory. My mind isn't going—so far as I can tell—but it's changing. I'm not thinking the way I used to think. I can feel it most strongly when I'm reading. Immersing myself in a book or a lengthy article used to be easy. My mind would get caught up in the narrative or the turns of the argument, and I'd spend hours strolling through long stretches of prose. That's rarely the case anymore. Now my concentration often starts to drift after two or three pages. I get fidgety, lose the thread, begin looking for something else to do. I feel as if I'm always dragging my wayward brain back to the text. The deep reading that used to come naturally has become a struggle.

I think I know what's going on. For more than a decade now, I've been spending a lot of time online, searching and surfing and sometimes adding to the great databases of the Internet. The Web has been a godsend to me as a writer. Research that once required days in the stacks or periodical rooms of libraries can now be done in minutes. A few Google searches, some quick clicks on hyperlinks, and I've got the telltale fact or pithy quote I was after. Even

when I'm not working, I'm as likely as not to be foraging in the Web's info-thickets—reading and writing e-mails, scanning headlines and blog posts, watching videos and listening to podcasts, or just tripping from link to link to link. (Unlike footnotes, to which they're sometimes likened, hyperlinks don't merely point to related works; they propel you toward them.)

For me, as for others, the Net is becoming a universal medium, the conduit for most of the information that flows through my eyes and ears and into my mind. The advantages of having immediate access to such an incredibly rich store of information are many, and they've been widely described and duly applauded. "The perfect recall of silicon memory," *Wired's* Clive Thompson has written, "can be an enormous boon to thinking." But that boon comes at a price. As the media theorist Marshall McLuhan pointed out in the 1960s, media are not just passive channels of information. They supply the stuff of thought, but they also shape the process of thought. And what the Net seems to be doing is chipping away my capacity for concentration and contemplation. My mind now expects to take in information the way the Net distributes it: in a swiftly moving stream of particles. Once I was a scuba diver in the sea of words. Now I zip along the surface like a guy on a Jet Ski.

I'm not the only one. When I mention my troubles with reading to friends and acquaintances—literary types, most of them—many say they're having similar experiences. The more they use the Web, the more they have to fight to stay focused on long pieces of writing. Some of the bloggers I follow have also begun mentioning the phenomenon. Scott Karp, who writes a blog about online media, recently confessed that he has stopped reading books altogether. "I was a lit major in college, and used to be [a] voracious book reader," he wrote. "What happened?" He speculates on the answer: "What if I do all my reading on the web not so much because the way I read has changed, i.e. I'm just seeking convenience, but because the way I THINK has changed?"

Bruce Friedman, who blogs regularly about the use of computers in medicine, also has described how the Internet has altered his mental habits. "I now have almost totally lost the ability to read and absorb a longish article on the web or in print," he wrote earlier this year. A pathologist who has long been on the faculty of the University of Michigan Medical School, Friedman elaborated on his comment in a telephone conversation with me. His thinking, he said, has taken on a "staccato" quality, reflecting the way he quickly scans short passages of text from many sources online. "I can't read *War and Peace* anymore," he admitted. "I've lost the ability to do that. Even a blog post of more than three or four paragraphs is too much to absorb. I skim it."

Anecdotes alone don't prove much. And we still await the long-term neurological and psychological experiments that will provide a definitive picture of how Internet use affects cognition. But a recently published study of online research habits, conducted by scholars from University College London, suggests that we may well be in the midst of a sea change in the way we read and think. As part of the five-year research program, the scholars examined computer logs documenting the behavior of visitors to two popular research sites, one operated by the British Library and one by a U.K. educational consortium, that provide access to journal articles, e-books, and other sources of written information. They found that people using the sites exhibited "a form of skimming activity," hopping from one source to another and rarely returning to any source they'd already visited. They typically read no more than one or two pages of an article or book before they would "bounce" out to another site. Sometimes they'd save a long article, but there's no evidence that they ever went back and actually read it. The authors of the study report:

It is clear that users are not reading online in the traditional sense; indeed there are signs that new forms of "reading" are emerging as users "power browse" horizontally through titles, contents pages and abstracts

going for quick wins. It almost seems that they go online to avoid reading in the traditional sense.

Thanks to the ubiquity of text on the Internet, not to mention the popularity of text-messaging on cell phones, we may well be reading more today than we did in the 1970s or 1980s, when television was our medium of choice. But it's a different kind of reading, and behind it lies a different kind of thinking—perhaps even a new sense of the self. "We are not only *what* we read," says Maryanne Wolf, a developmental psychologist at Tufts University and the author of *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain*. "We are *how* we read." Wolf worries that the style of reading promoted by the Net, a style that puts "efficiency" and "immediacy" above all else, may be weakening our capacity for the kind of deep reading that emerged when an earlier technology, the printing press, made long and complex works of prose commonplace. When we read online, she says, we tend to become "mere decoders of information." Our ability to interpret text, to make the rich mental connections that form when we read deeply and without distraction, remains largely disengaged.

Reading, explains Wolf, is not an instinctive skill for human beings. It's not etched into our genes the way speech is. We have to teach our minds how to translate the symbolic characters we see into the language we understand. And the media or other technologies we use in learning and practicing the craft of reading play an important part in shaping the neural circuits inside our brains. Experiments demonstrate that readers of ideograms, such as the Chinese, develop a mental circuitry for reading that is very different from the circuitry found in those of us whose written language employs an alphabet. The variations extend across many regions of the brain, including those that govern such essential cognitive functions as memory and the interpretation of visual and auditory stimuli. We can expect as well that the circuits woven by our use of the Net will be different from those woven by our reading of books and other printed works.

Sometime in 1882, Friedrich Nietzsche bought a typewriter—a Malling-Hansen Writing Ball, to be precise. His vision was failing, and keeping his eyes focused on a page had become exhausting and painful, often bringing on crushing headaches. He had been forced to curtail his writing, and he feared that he would soon have to give it up. The typewriter rescued him, at least for a time. Once he had mastered touch-typing, he was able to write with his eyes closed, using only the tips of his fingers. Words could once again flow from his mind to the page.

But the machine had a subtler effect on his work. One of Nietzsche's friends, a composer, noticed a change

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in the style of his writing. His already terse prose had become even tighter, more telegraphic. "Perhaps you will through this instrument even take to a new idiom," the friend wrote in a letter, noting that, in his own work, his "thoughts" in music and language often depend on the quality of pen and paper."

"You are right," Nietzsche replied, "our writing equipment takes part in the forming of our thoughts." Under the sway of the machine, writes the German media scholar Friedrich A. Kittler, Nietzsche's prose "changed from arguments to aphorisms, from thoughts to puns, from rhetoric to telegram style."

The human brain is almost infinitely malleable. People used to think that our mental meshwork, the dense connections formed among the 100 billion or so neurons inside our skulls, was largely fixed by the time we reached adulthood. But brain researchers have discovered that that's not the case. James Olds, a professor of neuroscience who directs the Krasnow Institute for Advanced Study at George Mason University, says that even the adult mind "is very plastic." Nerve cells routinely break old connections and form new ones. "The brain," according to Olds, "has the ability to reprogram itself on the fly, altering the way it functions."

As we use what the sociologist Daniel Bell has called our "intellectual technologies"—the tools that extend our mental rather than our physical capacities—we inevitably begin to take on the qualities of those technologies. The mechanical clock, which came into common use in the 14th century, provides a compelling example. In *Technics and Civilization*, the historian and cultural critic Lewis Mumford described how the clock "disassociated time from human events and helped create the belief in an independent world of mathematically measurable sequences." The "abstract framework of divided time" became "the point of reference for both action and thought."

The clock's methodical ticking helped bring into being the scientific mind and the scientific man. But it also took something away. As the late MIT computer scientist Joseph Weizenbaum observed in his 1976 book, *Computer Power and Human Reason: From Judgment to Calculation*, the conception of the world that emerged from the widespread use of timekeeping instruments "remains an impoverished version of the older one, for it rests on a rejection of those direct experiences that formed the basis for, and indeed constituted, the old reality." In deciding when to eat, to work, to sleep, to rise, we stopped listening to our senses and started obeying the clock.

The process of adapting to new intellectual technologies is reflected in the changing metaphors we use to explain ourselves to ourselves. When the mechanical clock arrived, people began thinking of their brains as operating "like clockwork." Today, in the age of software, we have come to think of them as operating "like computers." But

the changes, neuroscience tells us, go much deeper than metaphor. Thanks to our brain's plasticity, the adaptation occurs also at a biological level.

The Internet promises to have particularly far-reaching effects on cognition. In a paper published in 1936, the British mathematician Alan Turing proved that a digital computer, which at the time existed only as a theoretical machine, could be programmed to perform the function of any other information-processing device. And that's what we're seeing today. The Internet, an immeasurably powerful computing system, is subsuming most of our other intellectual technologies. It's becoming our map and our clock, our printing press and our typewriter, our calculator and our telephone, and our radio and TV.

When the Net absorbs a medium, that medium is recreated in the Net's image. It injects the medium's content with hyperlinks, blinking ads, and other digital gewgaws, and it surrounds the content with the content of all the other media it has absorbed. A new e-mail message, for instance, may announce its arrival as we're glancing over the latest headlines at a newspaper's site. The result is to scatter our attention and diffuse our concentration.

The Net's influence doesn't end at the edges of a computer screen, either. As people's minds become attuned to the crazy quilt of Internet media, traditional media have to adapt to the audience's new expectations. Television programs add text crawls and pop-up ads, and magazines and newspapers shorten their articles, introduce capsule summaries, and crowd their pages with easy-to-browse info-snippets. When, in March of this year, *The New York Times* decided to devote the second and third pages of every edition to article abstracts, its design director, Tom Bodkin, explained that the "shortcuts" would give harried readers a quick "taste" of the day's news, sparing them the "less efficient" method of actually turning the pages and reading the articles. Old media have little choice but to play by the new-media rules.

Never has a communications system played so many roles in our lives—or exerted such broad influence over our thoughts—as the Internet does today. Yet, for all that's been written about the Net, there's been little consideration of how, exactly, it's reprogramming us. The Net's intellectual ethic remains obscure.

About the same time that Nietzsche started using his typewriter, an earnest young man named Frederick Winslow Taylor carried a stopwatch into the Midvale Steel plant in Philadelphia and began a historic series of experiments aimed at improving the efficiency of the plant's machinists. With the approval of Midvale's owners, he recruited a group of factory hands, set them to work on various metalworking machines, and recorded and timed their every movement as well as the operations of the machines. By breaking down every job into a



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Americans spend a lot of time in their cars. Not because they want to. But because of massive traffic congestion. And almost daily gridlock. For many people, commutes to work and school and daycare can take up to three hours a day. According to traffic management experts, it's only going to get worse. In many American cities, it's the same situation with our schools, our emergency rooms, our public utilities, even our water resources. A majority of Americans agree that runaway population growth threatens their quality of life*. But with the U.S. Census projections indicating our population will explode from 300 million to 400 million in thirty years and 600 million by 2100**, quality of life for future generations will be gone unless we take action today. The Pew Hispanic Research Center projects 82% of the country's massive future population increase will be a result of immigration between 2005 and 2050. And for every four new U.S. residents whether from birth or immigration, approximately three more cars are added to our roads, increasing gridlock and air pollution. Together we can do something about it. We're the nation's leading experts on population and immigration trends and growth. Visit our websites to learn more and find out how you can help. Because wasting hours in your car is one pastime you can do without.

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sequence of small, discrete steps and then testing different ways of performing each one, Taylor created a set of precise instructions—an “algorithm,” we might say today—for how each worker should work. Midvale’s employees grumbled about the strict new regime, claiming that it turned them into little more than automatons, but the factory’s productivity soared.

More than a hundred years after the invention of the steam engine, the Industrial Revolution had at last found its philosophy and its philosopher. Taylor’s tight industrial choreography—his “system,” as he liked to call it—was embraced by manufacturers throughout the country and, in time, around the world. Seeking maximum speed, maximum efficiency, and maximum output, factory owners used time-and-motion studies to organize their work and configure the jobs of their workers. The goal, as Taylor defined it in his celebrated 1911 treatise, *The Principles of Scientific Management*, was to identify and adopt, for every job, the “one best method” of work and thereby

its search engine and other sites, it carries out thousands of experiments a day, according to the *Harvard Business Review*, and it uses the results to refine the algorithms that increasingly control how people find information and extract meaning from it. What Taylor did for the work of the hand, Google is doing for the work of the mind.

The company has declared that its mission is “to organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful.” It seeks to develop “the perfect search engine,” which it defines as something that “understands exactly what you mean and gives you back exactly what you want.” In Google’s view, information is a kind of commodity, a utilitarian resource that can be mined and processed with industrial efficiency. The more pieces of information we can “access” and the faster we can extract their gist, the more productive we become as thinkers.

Where does it end? Sergey Brin and Larry Page, the gifted young men who founded Google while pursuing doctoral degrees in computer science at Stanford, speak

The media or other technologies we use in learning the craft of reading play an important part in shaping the neural circuits inside our brains.

to effect “the gradual substitution of science for rule of thumb throughout the mechanic arts.” Once his system was applied to all acts of manual labor, Taylor assured his followers, it would bring about a restructuring not only of industry but of society, creating a utopia of perfect efficiency. “In the past the man has been first,” he declared; “in the future the system must be first.”

Taylor’s system is still very much with us; it remains the ethic of industrial manufacturing. And now, thanks to the growing power that computer engineers and software coders wield over our intellectual lives, Taylor’s ethic is beginning to govern the realm of the mind as well. The Internet is a machine designed for the efficient and automated collection, transmission, and manipulation of information, and its legions of programmers are intent on finding the “one best method”—the perfect algorithm—to carry out every mental movement of what we’ve come to describe as “knowledge work.”

Google’s headquarters, in Mountain View, California—the Googleplex—is the Internet’s high church, and the religion practiced inside its walls is Taylorism. Google, says its chief executive, Eric Schmidt, is “a company that’s founded around the science of measurement,” and it is striving to “systematize everything” it does. Drawing on the terabytes of behavioral data it collects through

frequently of their desire to turn their search engine into an artificial intelligence, a HAL-like machine that might be connected directly to our brains. “The ultimate search engine is something as smart as people—or smarter,” Page said in a speech a few years back. “For us, working on search is a way to work on artificial intelligence.” In a 2004 interview with *Newsweek*, Brin said, “Certainly if you had all the world’s information directly attached to your brain, or an artificial brain that was smarter than your brain, you’d be better off.” Last year, Page told a convention of scientists that Google is “really trying to build artificial intelligence and to do it on a large scale.”

Such an ambition is a natural one, even an admirable one, for a pair of math whizzes with vast quantities of cash at their disposal and a small army of computer scientists in their employ. A fundamentally scientific enterprise, Google is motivated by a desire to use technology, in Eric Schmidt’s words, “to solve problems that have never been solved before,” and artificial intelligence is the hardest problem out there. Why wouldn’t Brin and Page want to be the ones to crack it?

Still, their easy assumption that we’d all “be better off” if our brains were supplemented, or even replaced, by an artificial intelligence is unsettling. It suggests a belief that intelligence is the output of a mechanical process, a series of discrete steps that can be isolated, measured, and

optimized. In Google's world, the world we enter when we go online, there's little place for the fuzziness of contemplation. Ambiguity is not an opening for insight but a bug to be fixed. The human brain is just an outdated computer that needs a faster processor and a bigger hard drive.

The idea that our minds should operate as high-speed data-processing machines is not only built into the workings of the Internet, it is the network's reigning business model as well. The faster we surf across the Web—the more links we click and pages we view—the more opportunities Google and other companies gain to collect information about us and to feed us advertisements. Most of the proprietors of the commercial Internet have a financial stake in collecting the crumbs of data we leave behind as we flit from link to link—the more crumbs, the better. The last thing these companies want is to encourage leisurely reading or slow, concentrated thought. It's in their economic interest to drive us to distraction.

Maybe I'm just a worrywart. Just as there's a tendency to glorify technological progress, there's a countertendency to expect the worst of every new tool or machine. In Plato's *Phaedrus*, Socrates bemoaned the development of writing. He feared that, as people came to rely on the written word as a substitute for the knowledge they used to carry inside their heads, they would, in the words of one of the dialogue's characters, "cease to exercise their memory and become forgetful." And because they would be able to "receive a quantity of information without proper instruction," they would "be thought very knowledgeable when they are for the most part quite ignorant." They would be "filled with the conceit of wisdom instead of real wisdom." Socrates wasn't wrong—the new technology did often have the effects he feared—but he was shortsighted. He couldn't foresee the many ways that writing and reading would serve to spread information, spur fresh ideas, and expand human knowledge (if not wisdom).

The arrival of Gutenberg's printing press, in the 15th century, set off another round of teeth gnashing. The Italian humanist Hieronimo Squarciafico worried that the easy availability of books would lead to intellectual laziness, making men "less studious" and weakening their minds. Others argued that cheaply printed books and broadsheets would undermine religious authority, demean the work of scholars and scribes, and spread sedition and debauchery. As New York University professor Clay Shirky notes, "Most of the arguments made against the printing press were correct, even prescient." But, again, the doomsayers were unable to imagine the myriad blessings that the printed word would deliver.

So, yes, you should be skeptical of my skepticism. Perhaps those who dismiss critics of the Internet as Luddites or nostalgists will be proved correct, and from our

hyperactive, data-stoked minds will spring a golden age of intellectual discovery and universal wisdom. Then again, the Net isn't the alphabet, and although it may replace the printing press, it produces something altogether different. The kind of deep reading that a sequence of printed pages promotes is valuable not just for the knowledge we acquire from the author's words but for the intellectual vibrations those words set off within our own minds. In the quiet spaces opened up by the sustained, undistracted reading of a book, or by any other act of contemplation, for that matter, we make our own associations, draw our own inferences and analogies, foster our own ideas. Deep reading, as Maryanne Wolf argues, is indistinguishable from deep thinking.

If we lose those quiet spaces, or fill them up with "content," we will sacrifice something important not only in ourselves but in our culture. In a recent essay, the playwright Richard Foreman eloquently described what's at stake:

I come from a tradition of Western culture, in which the ideal (my ideal) was the complex, dense and "cathedral-like" structure of the highly educated and articulate personality—a man or woman who carried inside themselves a personally constructed and unique version of the entire heritage of the West. [But now] I see within us all (myself included) the replacement of complex inner density with a new kind of self—evolving under the pressure of information overload and the technology of the "instantly available."

As we are drained of our "inner repertory of dense cultural inheritance," Foreman concluded, we risk turning into "pancake people"—spread wide and thin as we connect with that vast network of information accessed by the mere touch of a button.

I'm haunted by that scene in *2001*. What makes it so poignant, and so weird, is the computer's emotional response to the disassembly of its mind: its despair as one circuit after another goes dark, its childlike pleading with the astronaut—"I can feel it. I can feel it. I'm afraid"—and its final reversion to what can only be called a state of innocence. HAL's outpouring of feeling contrasts with the emotionlessness that characterizes the human figures in the film, who go about their business with an almost robotic efficiency. Their thoughts and actions feel scripted, as if they're following the steps of an algorithm. In the world of *2001*, people have become so machinelike that the most human character turns out to be a machine. That's the essence of Kubrick's dark prophecy: as we come to rely on computers to mediate our understanding of the world, it is our own intelligence that flattens into artificial intelligence. ▀

Nicholas Carr's most recent book, *The Big Switch: Rewiring the World, From Edison to Google*, was published earlier this year.

How Donald Rumsfeld remade the U.S. military
for a more uncertain world

BY ROBERT D. KAPLAN

What



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Rumsfeld Got Right

In 1962, a Harvard economics professor named Thomas C. Schelling wrote an introduction to Roberta Wohlstetter's *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision*. In a few hundred words, Schelling, a future Nobel Prize winner, delivered a tour de force about the failure to anticipate events. "We were so busy thinking through some 'obvious' Japanese moves," he writes,

that we neglected to hedge against the choice that they actually made ... There is a tendency in our planning to confuse the unfamiliar with the improbable ... Furthermore, we made the terrible mistake ... of forgetting that a fine deterrent can make a superb target.

Schelling's introduction so impressed Donald H. Rumsfeld that he memorized parts of it and, as others have reported, regularly handed it out before the Pearl Harbor-level attack of 9/11. In his subsequent planning for the invasion of Iraq, Rumsfeld took Schelling's precepts to heart, thought pessimistically about all sorts of dire scenarios, and got the best possible result.

But only up to the point when organized Iraqi military resistance collapsed. In a tragic, latter-day extension of

Schelling's analysis, Rumsfeld was so busy thinking about the Iraqis' "obvious" military moves—launching chemical weapons, making a last stand in Baghdad—that he neglected to hedge against what they actually did: melt away and return weeks later as small bands of insurgents. Because of the meager resistance to our interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s, and the swiftness of our apparent victory in Afghanistan in 2001, which Rumsfeld had played a great part in orchestrating, by early 2003 the specter of a debilitating Vietnam-scale insurgency against the United States military had been sufficiently exorcised

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For an interview with Robert D. Kaplan about Rumsfeld and the military, visit www.theatlantic.com/rumsfeld.

to seem “unfamiliar,” and therefore to be confused with “the improbable.” By the time Saddam Hussein’s statue was toppled in Baghdad, we had become too impressed with our own military to see it as a “superb target.”

Rumsfeld, one former Pentagon official told me, saw Iraq’s degraded military as an easy target for our own; its destruction would provide a quick demonstration of American power, as well as get rid of the regional threat that the Iraqi regime constituted. No firm believer in democratic transformation, he probably assumed, as did many other people at the time, that any new regime in Baghdad, even a military one, would be a dramatic improvement, in strategic terms for the U.S. and in human-rights terms for the Iraqis. Rather than a fear of chaos, what is more apparent at this stage is a certain complacency on Rumsfeld’s part. For example, he evidently did not challenge the personnel system’s choice of ground commander in post-invasion Iraq. The Army’s 5th Corps was slated to rotate out of Germany and into Iraq. Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, the 5th Corps commander, and his staff, despite their service in Bosnia, had done little thinking about counterinsurgency. From that set of circumstances, a long trail of well-documented mistakes followed. In this and other cases, Rumsfeld, who is often accused of micromanaging, did not micromanage enough.

“Rumsfeld got war and transformation only half-right,” says Richard H. Shultz Jr., the director of international security studies at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy near Boston. “He was right that the lethality and speed of a military advance could be transformational, but he didn’t realize that the enemy might have an answer to that in the form of a war after the war.” As Thomas Donnelly, a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, puts it, Rumsfeld’s view of transformation was “profoundly self-referential,” concerned with what we could do, not what the enemy could.

Rumsfeld, an amateur wrestler and Navy S-2 Tracker pilot, had always seen the world as something that would bend to the force of his will. His early career was a triumph: a four-term congressman in his 30s, he was soon afterward director of the president’s office of economic opportunity, and then ambassador to NATO. Under Gerald R. Ford, he became, at 43, the youngest secretary of defense ever, oversaw the creation of the all-volunteer Army, and fought for a bigger defense budget to restore what he saw as a declining strategic advantage for the United States vis-à-vis the Soviet Union—just before the Kremlin’s geopolitical gains in Africa and Central America in the late 1970s. From 1977 to 1985, he ran the pharmaceutical company G. D. Searle.

Rumsfeld’s reputation in the 1970s was as it would be when he returned to government decades later. The dark master himself, Richard M. Nixon, had pronounced him a “ruthless little bastard.” If Franklin Delano Roosevelt

possessed, as Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. supposedly put it, “a second-class intellect, but a first-class temperament,” Rumsfeld was a man with a first-class intellect, but a third-class temperament. His in-your-face disposition led to dreadful relations with Congress and the so-called Revolt of the Generals in 2006, when a half-dozen retired senior officers demanded his resignation. “The man is capable of raking down all opposition, and has an astonishing ability not to listen to experts,” said retired Army General Barry McCaffrey, who says he admires Rumsfeld’s patriotism, ferocious intelligence, and formidable charm. But heeding experts, McCaffrey went on, is what has saved the career of many a high official not nearly as intelligent.

During the Clinton years, the military gained too much power over the civilian defense leadership, subtly using the president’s lack of military service to get its way. Rumsfeld, a civilian primacist, shifted that dynamic too far in the other direction. His method of creative destruction, brought over from his years in the corporate world, was simply too much for a static, hidebound institution like the Pentagon. “Rumsfeld was more effective as a critic of the Pentagon than as a leader of it,” says Richard J. Danzig, a Clinton-era secretary of the Navy, now an adviser to Barack Obama. A critic sees problems; a leader creates dynamic consensus.

A Tom Toles cartoon in 2006 declared Rumsfeld “WRONG ABOUT EVERYTHING.” Not quite. I discussed Rumsfeld with more than two dozen defense experts, Republicans and Democrats alike (though mostly centrists), many of whom had government experience. Their impressions were more measured than Rumsfeld’s toxic image in the media would suggest. Although I had briefed Rumsfeld twice, in 2002 and 2006, about my worries regarding Iraq, when I reached out to him a year ago he wouldn’t meet with me. For this piece, he provided matter-of-fact, occasionally opaque written responses to some of my questions. Thanks to his long tenure and personal dynamism, Rumsfeld has had an impact that will go far beyond Iraq in shaping the actions of future administrations. Obsessed with what could go wrong, Rumsfeld was a brilliant worrier. It is in his Schelling-inspired pessimism where we might find some saving graces to his legacy.

MANIFEST UNCERTAINTY

Even before 9/11, Rumsfeld saw a new strategic landscape of manifest uncertainty, of fundamental and catastrophic surprise. Consider the conclusions drawn in 1998 by the Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States, which Rumsfeld chaired (and which had, among its members, Paul D. Wolfowitz): the ballistic-missile threat to the United States was growing; our intelligence community’s ability to track that threat was diminishing; and the “U.S. might well have little or no warning before operational

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deployment" by countries like Iran of ballistic missiles that could reach our soil.

Not surprisingly, that threat and the need to counter it topped Rumsfeld's fret list when he returned to the Pentagon, in January 2001. Before his first year in office was over, the United States had moved to abrogate the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty it had signed with the U.S.S.R. in 1972, limiting missile-defense systems. As Rumsfeld saw it, while the logic of mutually assured destruction still held for two rational and conservative defense bureaucracies in Washington and Moscow, it might not work with terrorist groups or rogue states that lacked proper command-and-control oversight. Development of a missile-defense system accelerated; as of early 2008, there were 24 interceptors in silos in Alaska and California, and 25 on board U.S. ships in the Pacific. The system remains far from foolproof; it is also the single most expensive weapons system in the Pentagon's budget, as well as its most costly

civilians should not be able to deploy too casually. But Rumsfeld worried that the world was too messy, too fluid—with one crisis flowing into the next across geographical regions—and the dangers facing America too complex and varied for such a cut-and-dried approach.

Of course, by violating aspects of the Powell doctrine in Iraq, Rumsfeld and his subordinates arguably showed themselves to be precisely the stupid civilians the doctrine was meant to guard against. Yet the Powell doctrine isn't perfect. Kuwait was pillaged in 1990 while Powell spent months building up forces in Saudi Arabia. His doctrine seemingly justified ignoring the Balkans in the 1990s, but we inserted troops anyway, and debilitating wars did not result—indeed, the stabilization of the former Yugoslavia and the expansion of NATO to the Black Sea indicate that the Balkan interventions were in the nation's interest. An unwillingness to engage in any but the smallest deployments, or in big ones that carried the certainty of a clean

Even before 9/11, Rumsfeld saw a new strategic landscape of manifest uncertainty, of fundamental and catastrophic surprise.

R&D program. And the money spent on missile defense might have been better used to counter more-immediate nuclear threats, such as dirty bombs and the cross-border smuggling of enriched uranium. Yet there have been big improvements in the system's capabilities, and even a partial missile defense will give America more leverage and freedom of action in dealing with adversaries than did a relic like the ABM treaty.

Just as Rumsfeld wanted to do away with the enshrined assumptions of Cold War deterrence, he was keenly focused on altering the Pentagon mind-set captured by the so-called Powell doctrine. When Rumsfeld was secretary of defense in the 1970s, Colin Powell was an Army colonel. By the time Rumsfeld returned to the Pentagon, a quarter century later, Powell's canonical fingerprints were all over the building. As the senior military assistant to Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger in the early 1980s, Powell had helped devise the Weinberger doctrine, from which his own doctrine emanated. Both favored major conventional combat operations with beginnings, middles, and ends, to be undertaken only when a vital national interest was threatened. Powell, in his later roles as national-security adviser and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, emphasized overwhelming force, exit strategies, and clear, attainable objectives, not to mention the need for broad international support. The Powell doctrine essentially saw the military as a precious national asset that stupid

conventional victory, can itself be a form of retreat and defeat. "What's the point of having this superb military that you're always talking about, if we can't use it?" Madeleine Albright, then-ambassador to the United Nations, asked then-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Powell in 1993, during a discussion of intervention in Bosnia. Rumsfeld might have complained similarly, though his conception of the national interest was very different from hers.

In Rumsfeld's view, U.S. troops in one part of the world would have to be ready to deploy to another on a moment's notice, and be ready to fight or to provide relief. Everything would be expeditionary. Hence his fixation with changing the global posture of the military, and transforming it as a fighting force. The intellectual groundwork for both transitions was started during Bill Clinton's administration, but Rumsfeld is the one who got them going.

In the mid-1980s, the United States had a cluster of large, fully developed bases in Europe and the Far East, with 250,000 personnel in West Germany and 125,000 in East Asia. By 9/11, because of a process begun by the George H. W. Bush and Clinton administrations, those numbers had dropped to 118,000 in Europe and 89,000 in East Asia. Rumsfeld wasn't satisfied, though. Afghanistan and Iraq had justified his worries that our troops were not only poorly positioned to fight where they were needed, but also unable to move quickly or freely because

of the occasional need to secure transit permission from host countries. In 2003, for example, Austria forbade the use of its airspace and declined to give the U.S. any transit rights en route to Iraq.

Thus, by 2004, the Pentagon unveiled plans to bring home an additional 70,000 troops from those fixed garrisons, even as it moved to expand a network of bare-bones sites in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America to support rotational rather than permanently stationed forces. Such “lily pad” bases would be different from the “Little Americas” of the Cold War: no soldiers’ spouses, no kids, no day-care centers, no dogs, no churches. A leaner presence might prove less of an impediment to bilateral relations. The number of status-of-forces agreements with host countries doubled from the end of the Cold War through the end of Rumsfeld’s tenure, from 45 to over 90. And the Air Force signed more than 20 comparable gas-and-go agreements with countries in Africa while Rumsfeld was secretary of defense. Andrew Krepinevich and Robert Work, president and vice president, respectively, at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, told me that Rumsfeld got global posture basically right for a chaotic world by emphasizing, in Work’s words, an austere “global coaling-station network.” Other experts, including some from Democratic administrations, echoed their views.

A counterargument is that troops are needed not just to fight but to show political will. As one Democratic former defense official told me, “You need to demonstrate to the Russians that NATO still matters,” and that means troops in Europe. McCaffrey, in particular, poured scorn on Rumsfeld’s desire to draw down further in Germany, noting that American troops there not only are important to the Poles and other eastern Europeans threatened by Russia, but also are much closer to the Middle East than they would be back in “fortress America.”

A NEW COMMAND STRUCTURE

A world in which troops have to traverse regions or hemispheres to get to the fight required a more unified command structure. Rumsfeld was not comfortable with the power of geographic-area commanders and the fact that they *owned* troops. The area commands had been given new powers by the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols act, which aimed to reduce the interservice rivalries exposed by the Vietnam War and the failed attempt to rescue hostages in Iran. They are joint commands, in which one commander represents all the services. As such, the area commands had become the most powerful bureaucratic elements within the military, with the authority to fight the nation’s wars. Rumsfeld tried to break the lock that individual services still held on area commands (a lock that Goldwater-Nichols was supposed to have prevented) by naming a Navy admiral to run the Army-dominated

Southern Command, trying to get an Air Force general to run the Navy-dominated Pacific Command, and so on.

He spent a lot of time worrying about seams on the map—for example, where Central Command ended and Pacific Command began (at the borders of India and Pakistan, and Kazakhstan and China, and in the middle of the increasingly critical Indian Ocean). How would the Pentagon handle a conflict athwart such a seam? Rumsfeld centralized the command structure by subtly weakening the area commands and strengthening the global commands. Joint Forces Command got responsibility for recommending troop rotations from one area to another. Transportation Command took control of various air- and sealift commands, and of getting matériel right up to the battlefield. Strategic Command got control of space, cyber warfare, reconnaissance, and missile defense. Special Operations Command took on the global manhunt for al-Qaeda and went from being a mere force provider to a full-fledged war-fighting command that could operate alongside or even ahead of the area commands.

Parts of the world were unassigned when Rumsfeld came into office; he assigned them. He created Northern Command for the defense of the continental United States and put Canada and Mexico inside it. He assigned Russia to European Command and Antarctica to Pacific Command. Out of part of European Command, which was responsible for much of Africa, he created Africa Command—a potentially pathbreaking bureaucratic instrument that incorporates other agencies like the State Department and emphasizes bilateral training programs and indirect, humanitarian-affairs-oriented approaches over combat. As obvious as all these choices seem, they weren’t when Rumsfeld made them.

GO EAST, YOUNG MAN

In a larger sense, Rumsfeld saw military power and competition moving from Europe to Asia. He worried that, as in Europe, our considerable military presence in South Korea and Japan—the legacy of the Korean War and World War II—had bred unhealthy dependencies. In South Korea, we had a major ground-forces commitment to a country that was shrinking its army, even though it had become one of the world’s largest industrial powers, with an economy 30 times the size of North Korea’s.

Rumsfeld told the left-wing, anti-American government in power in Seoul in the middle of this decade that the United States had to reposition its forces in the country or leave. This very risky gambit resulted in protracted negotiations involving the Pentagon, the National Security Council, the State Department, and the South Korean government, ultimately yielding a new framework for American soldiers to remain in Korea indefinitely. U.S. forces would redeploy south of the demilitarized zone, return facilities to the South Korean military (including

the contentious Yongsan Garrison in the heart of Seoul) and shrink from 37,000 to 25,000 troops, with more air and naval assets to make up for the loss of boots on the ground. Meanwhile, the South Koreans agreed to reconsider their own troop reductions, to take over responsibility for the DMZ, and to accept operational control of allied forces in the event of a war. Here is one danger, though: with China rising and America preoccupied in Mesopotamia, our troop drawdown could result in the very Finlandization of the Korean Peninsula that Rumsfeld sought to avoid.

Rumsfeld also took the lead in revamping the U.S.-Japan military relationship. Japan agreed (among other things) to spend billions of dollars to defend itself against North Korean ballistic missiles, and to host the first nuclear aircraft-carrier strike group to forward-deploy overseas (a notable development for a country neurotic about nuclear weapons). This was painstaking micro-work for Rumsfeld: moving carrier air wings—pilots and their families—from Atsugi, where the Japanese wanted them out, to more-spacious quarters in Iwakuni. The Marine Air Corps Station at Futenma, in a very congested part of

1992 closure of American bases there, opening the door to a new bilateral defense relationship.

Rumsfeld threw his support behind a plan to deploy more aircraft-carrier strike groups in the Pacific rather than keep them hugging the shores of the continental United States. He concluded a strategic framework agreement with Singapore and played a large, very deliberate role in the post-Cold War U.S. rapprochement with India: selling the amphibious ship U.S.S. *Trenton* to the Indian navy, offering F-18 Super Hornets to the Indian air force and P-8 Poseidons as replacements for India's P-3 Orion surveillance planes, and boosting the number of naval and air-force exchanges.

By the middle of this decade, just as a new, more flexible, austere, and far-flung basing constellation was emerging worldwide, empowered by a more centrally controlled command structure, troubled relationships with crucial Asian allies were on the mend. Such developments, as Rumsfeld saw them, would help the United States react in expeditionary style to unforeseen emergencies, prosecute the war on terrorism, and hedge against a rising Chinese military without unnecessarily provoking

Rumsfeld pressed for one of the most significant shifts in Army organization since Napoleon's day, changing the central maneuver unit from the division to the brigade combat team.

Okinawa and a target of Japanese hatred for the American military, would be relocated to Naga, in the less populous north of Okinawa. Meanwhile, the Marine presence on Okinawa overall would be reduced from 18,000 to 10,000, with the difference moving (at Japanese expense) to Guam, which Rumsfeld was building up with submarines, aerial tankers, fighter jets, bombers, and so forth. Although the Clinton administration had started expanding facilities on Guam, here again was another instance in which Rumsfeld's intervention was critical to forcing change.

The Philippines was a major focus of Rumsfeld's attempt to recast American strategy in Asia, and it is one whose importance has been underestimated. In 2002, U.S. Special Operations forces teamed up with the Philippine military to clear the south of the country of Islamic terrorists linked to al-Qaeda. The operation on the strategic island of Basilan was successful, and in 2005 it was extended to the island of Jolo. The U.S. military, mainly Army Special Forces, trained the Filipinos, helped gather intelligence, and conducted humanitarian relief, even as the Filipinos did the actual fighting. By using the indirect approach, the operation raised the stature of the U.S. military in the Filipino media for the first time since the

it. These are aspects of Rumsfeld's legacy that any new administration will quietly adapt or reengineer to its own needs, rather than repeal outright. Barry Blechman, a distinguished fellow at the Henry L. Stimson Center in Washington who is respected by Democrats and Republicans alike, credits Rumsfeld for these changes, which he notes that Congress has also supported. In a note to me, Rumsfeld categorized these decisions as "tough, sometimes criticized, and even condemned, but necessary and, I believe, enduring."

A TRANSFORMATION, OF SORTS

Why was Rumsfeld, by many accounts, more astute in dealing with Korea and Japan than with Iraq? Ironically, the quagmire that Rumsfeld helped create in Mesopotamia also had the effect of turning these once-inviolable Asian relationships into second-order issues open to renegotiation. Rumsfeld also had more-immediate access to area expertise. He himself had been a Japan aficionado since the early 1960s, with his own longtime contacts, a passion that came from having a father aboard a carrier in the Pacific during World War II while the family lived in Coronado, California. Moreover,

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the chairman of the Joint Chiefs from 2001 to 2005, Air Force General Richard B. Myers, who was in over his head when dealing with Middle Eastern insurgencies, had commanded U.S. forces in Japan. On the whole, thanks to the half-century-long presence of so many American troops in Korea and Japan, people around the table in the E Ring knew what they were dealing with when it came to the Far East—something that could not always be said of their encounters with the Muslim world.

Another factor was also at work: the whole point of Rumsfeld's Pacific-centric military worldview, which his global coaling-station network was meant to enforce, was for U.S. forces to be light and lethal, reacting quickly without getting entrenched in any spot. A long occupation of Iraq didn't fit into this vision, which may be one reason that, as Andrew Hoehn, a Rand Corporation vice president and former deputy assistant defense secretary under Rumsfeld, told me, Rumsfeld often seemed more passionate about preparing the military for future challenges in Asia than he did about dealing with the occupation of Iraq. Rather than constructively worry about Iraq and take charge of policy there, he veered toward ambivalence: he allowed Sanchez and L. Paul Bremer III, head of the Coalition Provisional Authority, to work at cross-purposes, and his neglect yielded an enfeebling status quo and ultimately a slide into civil war.

All of Rumsfeld's changes to the U.S. military presence overseas fit into a larger effort to transform the military as a fighting force. Transformation, particularly of the Army, began in the 1990s under a Democratic administration and Army Chief of Staff Eric Shinseki, among other general officers. Then-Governor George W. Bush, in a 1999 speech at the Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina, cited "a revolution in the technology of war" and called for forces that must be "agile, lethal, readily deployable, and require a minimum of logistical support." Rumsfeld would become associated with transformation, though it was not as much a part of his original agenda as was missile defense. In fact, had former Indiana Republican Senator Dan Coats and former Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Armitage, who had both pushed the issue in the 1990s, been chosen as the defense secretary and deputy defense secretary, respectively (as was mooted in late 2000), transformation might have been further along today—one reason why Kurt M. Campbell, chief executive officer of the Center for a New American Security (where I am a senior fellow), says that the failure to appoint Coats and Armitage was "one of the biggest personnel blunders" of the Bush administration.

Rumsfeld, of course, wouldn't agree. Regarding transformation, he wrote me that his team "put special emphasis on the importance of more horizontal, decentralized structures that share and leverage the information necessary for effective and timely decision-making, as

opposed to the bureaucratic stovepiping that dominated U.S. national security institutions during the Cold War." Yet one could also argue that much of the transformation that did occur under Rumsfeld was the result of the debilitating war in Iraq, which forced the Pentagon, and the Army in particular, to change momentarily, in ways that no defense secretary could have managed on his own.

Nevertheless, Rumsfeld did press for one of the most significant shifts in Army organization since the Napoleonic era, changing the Army's central maneuver unit from the division to the brigade combat team. A brigade was only half or a third the size of a division (which could have anywhere from 10,000 to 15,000 soldiers). Its headquarters element was less bureaucratic and less top-heavy with colonels. The size of a brigade could be fitted to the situation. Rumsfeld's emphasis on brigades represented an organizational means for dealing with a more anarchic, unconventional world. He planned to increase the number of Army brigades by a third, even as he reduced the overhead staff at the division level.

But for Rumsfeld, transformation was primarily about changes not in how we structure forces but in *how we fight*. Exhibit A was Afghanistan, where, as he put it in a *Foreign Affairs* article in 2002, "the nineteenth century met the twenty-first century," as Army Special Forces and CIA troops coordinated with Air Force special operators on horseback calling in precision strikes. Indeed, Rumsfeld was an avid supporter of special-operations forces (SOF). Against Navy resistance, he led the effort to refit ballistic-missile submarines with SEAL delivery vehicles in place of Trident nuclear warheads, to make it easier to land special operators on beachheads. His passion for SOF was shared by a number of Democrats, including Senators Carl Levin, John Kerry, and Jack Reed. With Congress's support, Rumsfeld got SOF's budget doubled, from \$3.5 billion to \$7 billion: proof that just because Donald Rumsfeld believed something, didn't mean it was wrong.

Yet SOF has two traditions: direct action (combat), and a softer, embrace-your-indigenous-brother training approach. In his early years as defense secretary, Rumsfeld was more interested in direct action. Al-Qaeda, he thought, warranted a global manhunt and little more. Only later, after his comeuppance in Iraq, and as confirmed by the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review, did he come around to the view that with an unpredictable enemy—and one that was easy to kill but hard to locate—we needed to understand the local language and culture and to bond with the indigenous inhabitants. During his tenure, the number of Arabic speakers in the military grew by 30 percent, Farsi speakers by 50 percent, Urdu speakers by 76 percent, and Chinese speakers by 57 percent. But these figures seem impressive only because the starting numbers were so low. For example, before 9/11 there were 4,384 speakers of



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Arabic, but only 5,703 by 2005. Compare this with 92,852 Spanish-speakers and 14,097 French-speakers. Future defense secretaries will have to do much better.

THE PRICE OF BEING HALF-RIGHT

The real tragedy of Rumsfeld's career may not have been that he didn't plan for an occupation of Iraq, but that 9/11 happened in the first place. On September 10, 2001, Rumsfeld gave a speech lambasting the Pentagon bureaucracy, his overriding concern. He was so frustrated by the glacial pace of progress that it was unclear whether he would have stayed on as defense secretary without a 9/11. "Do you know why Rumsfeld picked Wolfowitz to be his deputy defense secretary?" one former Republican defense official began. "Because Rumsfeld cared more about organization than he did about policy, and needed an alter ego to handle the policy side. Rumsfeld planned to be his own chief operating officer." After 9/11, management reverted mostly to Wolfowitz, as Rumsfeld began to concentrate more on the "Global War on Terrorism." It is famously said in Washington that Wolfowitz, as an academic, had no management experience. That is a narrow version of the truth, however. He was not just an academic but a dean, an assistant secretary of state for East Asia, an undersecretary of defense for policy, and an ambassador to Indonesia, running one of America's largest embassies, which won a management award from the State Department during his tenure. Wolfowitz may have been a bad manager, but his résumé gives little indication of it.

Regarding management, Rumsfeld was at times his own worst enemy, distracting rather than concentrating the bureaucracy with his famed notes, or "snowflakes." But Rumsfeld did after a fashion attend to the books, even if massive cost overruns and a ballooning defense budget were the hallmarks of his tenure. According to his comptroller, Dov S. Zakheim, currently a vice president at Booz Allen Hamilton, Rumsfeld reduced the more than \$3 trillion of improperly recorded, unaudited Pentagon transactions to hundreds of billions. He created a defense business board, and reformed the national-security personnel system to take into account considerations of merit. Rumsfeld is often spoken of in the same negative breath as Vietnam-era Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara. Zakheim and others with whom I spoke made a positive association: McNamara failed on Vietnam, but he succeeded in devising a planning, programming, and budgeting system that lasted for 40 years. Time will tell whether Rumsfeld accomplished something similar.

Additionally, Rumsfeld may have been right on other things: de-emphasizing nuclear weapons by giving Strategic Command a conventional-strike capacity, and by sharply reducing the nuclear stockpile; creating an undersecretary of intelligence to make relations with the civilian intelligence community more seamless; developing

the littoral combat ship, however overpriced, as the first phase of a counterinsurgency force at sea; killing the Crusader artillery program and using the funds to research precision-guided rockets and mortars for the Army; encouraging the Marines to stand up several battalions to Special Operations Command; helping expand NATO eastward; and forcing change upon NATO by appointing Marine General James Jones to run the Army-centric organization, by trying to establish a NATO rapid-reaction force, and by replacing the supreme allied command for the Atlantic, located in Norfolk, with an allied command for transformation. On a number of these things, he got significant help from the much-maligned Wolfowitz.

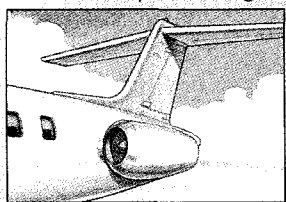
The list of things Rumsfeld got wrong is also long, better known, and historically more consequential. To wit, his decision to more or less go it alone in Afghanistan in 2001 made strict military but not political sense. The failure to allow NATO a large role in the beginning gave alliance members little stake in the outcome—a dynamic that continues to hamper the war's conduct. His use of private contractors in Iraq made sense in order to create efficiencies in the rear, but because Iraq constituted an irregular war, there was often no rear there, so contractors found themselves in the midst of the fighting. The abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib was an abject failure in the chain of command going all the way up to the defense secretary, who must be held accountable.

Rumsfeld did achieve a measure of redemption in the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review. The concept of the "long war" elaborated in the QDR was less a sign of Rumsfeld's warmongering than of his belated realization that the indirect approach exemplified by the strategy in the Philippines pointed a way forward. As the QDR says, "Efforts ... on five continents demonstrate the importance of being able to work with and through [indigenous] partners, to operate clandestinely and to sustain a persistent but low-visibility presence." This last of his QDRs also acknowledged the need for stabilization operations, or nation-building. That is a far cry from the Rumsfeld who at the beginning of his tenure couldn't wait to get our troops out of their peacekeeping mission in the Balkans.

So Donald Rumsfeld finally got it right. But as Richard Shultz Jr. of the Fletcher School argued, his being half-wrong on operational strategy for too many years cost too many Iraqis, Afghans, and Americans untold suffering. No improvements in Iraq and Afghanistan will reverse that verdict. As for the rest, developments in Asia, Africa, and Europe for years to come will say much more about Rumsfeld's legacy: a legacy that, in one final irony, may give future Madeleine Albrights more of the tools they need to intervene for humanitarian reasons. ▀

Robert D. Kaplan is a national correspondent for *The Atlantic* and a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security in Washington. His most recent book is *Hog Pilots, Blue Water Grunts: The American Military in the Air, at Sea, and on the Ground* (2007).

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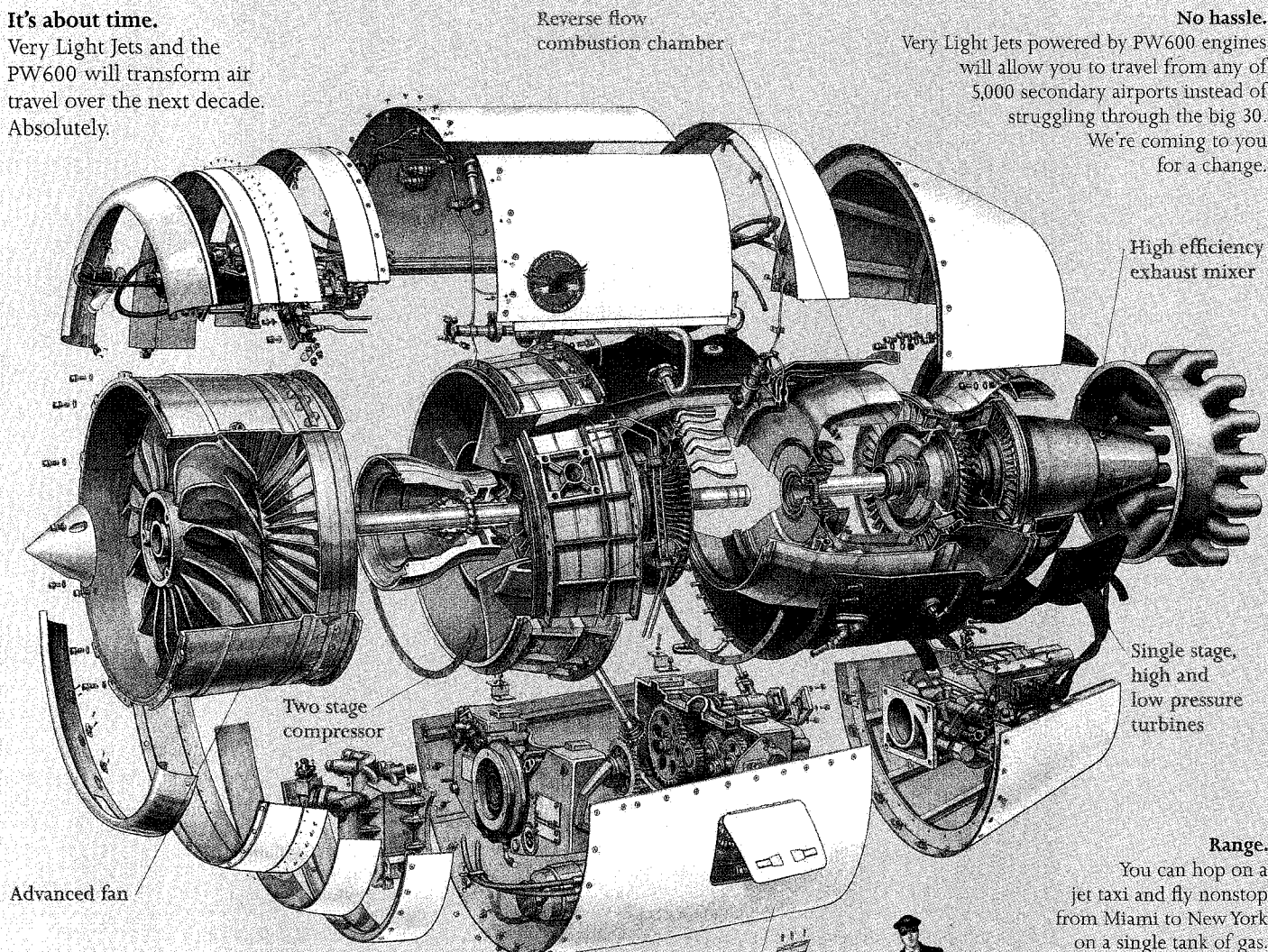
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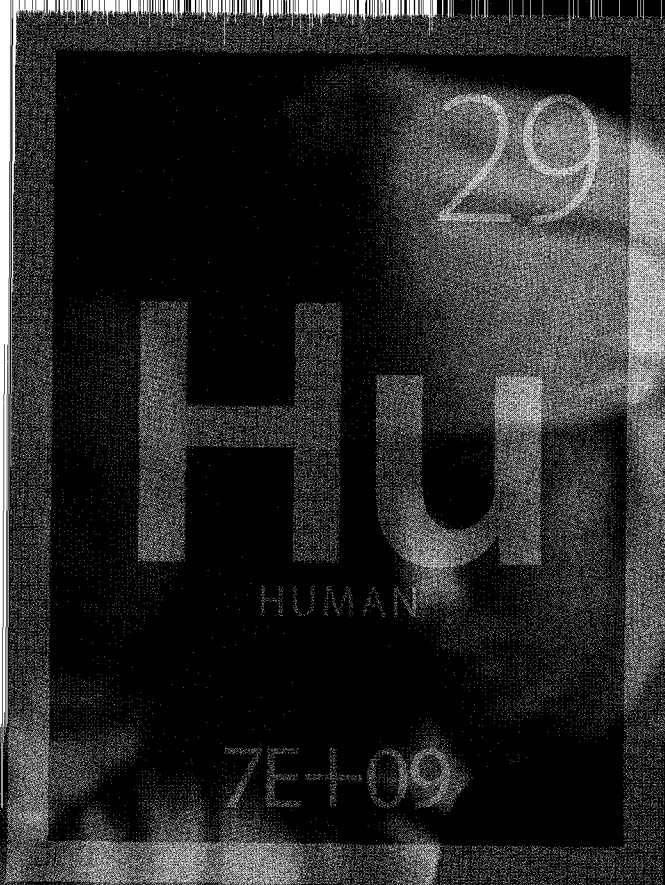


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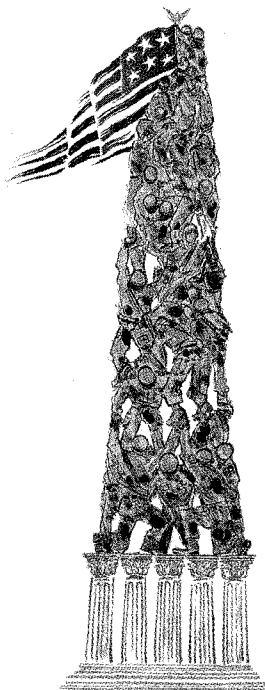
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Creating the 2008 Ideas Issue prompted *The Atlantic's* editors to start debating which ideas—good and bad—most informed the national conversation over the past twelve months. Herewith the result: a thumbnail intellectual history of the year

Illustrations by Ben Gibson

The 11½ Biggest



THE SURGE

by James Fallows

It is hard for Americans to keep talking about Iraq. Who was right and wrong about the war before it started, whether it could have been handled better once under way—these are arguments from a long time ago, and ultimately pointless. Presidential candidates must offer plans about what comes next, but the reality is that no one knows. Meanwhile, the ethnic politics and shifting alignments and steps forward and back in Iraqi governmental structure make it hard for anyone except the experts to follow the action. The experts—and the minority of American families directly touched by service and sacrifice in the drawn-out war.

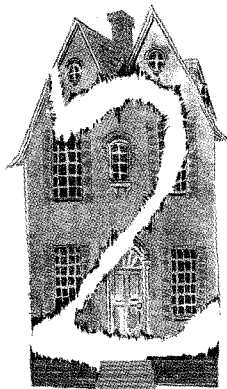
What Americans *can* talk about is “the surge.” This is a concept connected to an impressive man, Army General David Petraeus, who is also controversial enough to be interesting. The surge is connected to an important intellectual trend: the revival of counterinsurgency, or COIN, strategy for the U.S. military, with its emphasis on patient, person-to-person skills rather than on super-precise weaponry.

And it has offered supporters of the war something that seemed lost since 2003: the chance for a new start, with things done right this time.

But a year after the surge began, more U.S. troops were in Iraq than when it started, and the argument for keeping them there had descended into circular reasoning. Either the new strategy was working so well that it shouldn't be interrupted, or else things were still so precarious that the U.S. couldn't afford to withdraw now. We were back to the impossibility of talking about Iraq.

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To submit your own biggest ideas of the year and to view other readers' contributions, visit www.theatlantic.com/ideas.



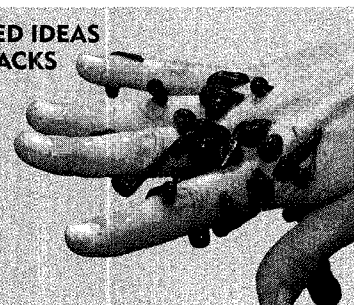
RENTING

by Clive Crook

Enough said.

ONCE-REPUDIATED IDEAS STAGING COMEBACKS

- Medicinal leeches
- John McCain
- The gold standard
- Stagflation
- Multilateralism
- Van Halen
- Hillarycare



LEECHES: ALASTAIR MILLER/BLOOMBERG NEWS/LANDOV

POST-PARTISANSHIP

by Jonathan Rauch

You may not be able to define the “post-partisans,” but you know them when you hear them, if only because they all seem to use the same speechwriter. Who made each of the following statements? Your choices are Michael Bloomberg, Barack Obama, and Arnold Schwarzenegger:

A) “All of our most deeply held dreams and aspirations require us to build on our common bonds rather than keep resorting to the tired battle cries of partisan politics that divides and demoralizes us.”

B) “Perhaps more than any other time in our recent history, we need a new kind of politics, one that can excavate and build upon those shared understandings that pull us together as Americans.”

C) “We do not have to settle for the same old politics ... [We need] a fundamentally different way of behaving—one built on cooperation and collaboration.”

The idea of a politics that rises above partisanship dates back at least to the Progressive movement of a century ago, and the term *post-partisan* surfaced as far back as the 1970s.

But only lately has “post-partisan” become Post-Partisan®, a brand with a following. Advocates say it stands for everything good, including (to quote from just one speech by Bloomberg, the mayor of New York) “real results,” “honesty and common sense,” “innovation,” “teamwork,” etc., etc.

Still, vacuous though the concept may be, the exasperation it bespeaks is real and justified. America is a centrist country without a centrist party, and many Americans, whether they call themselves post-partisan, independent, or just moderate, are getting fed up.

Answers: A) Schwarzenegger. B) Obama. C) Bloomberg.

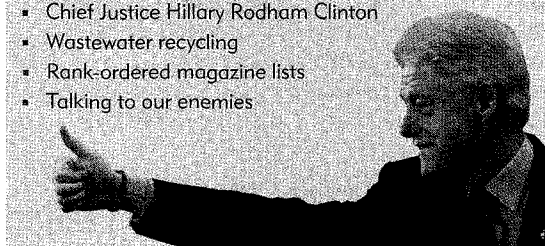
INNOVATIONS WE MIGHT SERIOUSLY REGRET

- Mortgage-backed securities
- High-definition pornography
- The Hadron supercollider
- Dubai
- Non-Communist Russia
- The Wendy's Baconator sandwich



SEEMINGLY HORRIFYING IDEAS THAT COULD HAVE POTENTIAL

- Wii yoga
- Chief Justice Hillary Rodham Clinton
- Wastewater recycling
- Rank-ordered magazine lists
- Talking to our enemies



Ideas of the Year

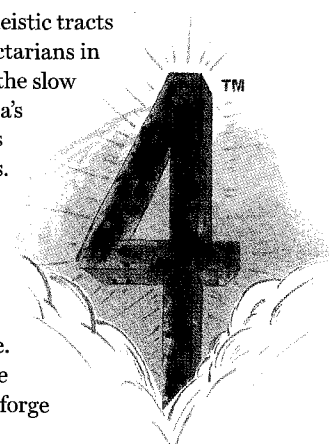
MASS-MARKET ATHEISM

by Ross Douthat

Okay, so atheism isn't exactly a new idea; indeed, it's humanity's oldest or second-oldest theological theory, depending on how you play the chicken-and-egg game with belief and unbelief. But you have to go all the way back to late-Victorian scoffers like Robert Ingersoll and Mark Twain to find a moment when celebrity skeptics enjoyed the sort of mass-market success that ours—from Christopher Hitchens and Sam Harris to Daniel Dennett and Richard Dawkins—are enjoying in America today.

In part, the vogue for atheistic tracts reflects the talents of the tractarians in question. But it also reflects the slow but steady growth of America's secular demographic, and its newfound self-consciousness. The post-9/11 moment, in particular, seems to have made unbelievers feel unexpectedly embattled, besieged by fundamentalists both abroad and at home. And there's nothing quite like a feeling of embattlement to forge solidarity—and sell books.

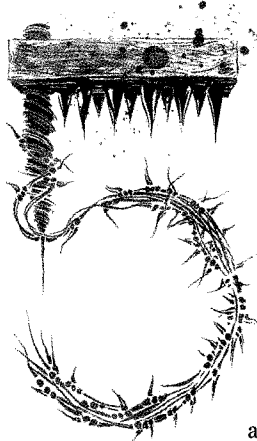
In this sense, the new mass-market atheism is following the same pattern as the Christian Right before it, which likewise drew strength from a sense of embattlement and persecution. These mirror-image movements can be seen as backlashes against the genteel secularism of mid-century, with its faintly condescending respect for the idea of Religion, and its studious indifference toward actual belief. This backlash has made debates over religion more polarizing than they used to be—and also more interesting.



WE TORTURED

by Andrew Sullivan

When the Abu Ghraib story broke, it seemed a literally incredible spectacle. The president himself expressed shock and disbelief and argued that it was the antithesis of American values. For a while, most Americans accepted this narrative—of a few “bad apples” improvising sadism on the night shift, the kind of thing individuals sometimes do in the context of a chaotic war. But in the past year, we witnessed a tipping point in the recognition of the enormity of what had occurred. As White House memos defining torture out of existence came to light, it became empirically irrefutable that Abu Ghraib was an exception to presidential policy only insofar as it wasn’t implemented by properly authorized personnel. The president eventually conceded earlier this year that he had indeed convened a group of his closest advisers to devise and monitor “enhanced interrogation techniques” at Guantánamo Bay long before the Abu Ghraib scandal; the attorney general admitted that the president



had even authorized waterboarding, a technique that easily qualifies as torture in international and domestic law. It took a few years, but finally the real narrative emerged. The myth of American torture became the fact of American torture.

But something else happened as well. The chief defenders of these methods among the presidential candidates—Mitt Romney and Rudy Giuliani—failed to gain traction in the primaries, and the one Republican who has consistently opposed these techniques (and who had had some of them used against him in Vietnam) won the nomination. The two leading Democratic candidates have vowed to end abusive interrogation upon coming to office. And the pseudo-legal arguments of former Bush officials such as John Yoo were both repudiated by the administration itself and subjected to withering critiques in the legal community.

We learned, in other words, that America had crossed the Geneva boundaries in the years after 9/11. We also learned that America has the resources to correct itself in the end.

IDEAS THAT HAVE OUTLIVED THEIR USEFULNESS

- Presidential front-running
- In-car cigarette-lighting technology
- Corn syrup
- Fat-cat political contributors
- iCaptivity for digital music files



IDEAS WE THINK WE LIKE—BUT THE JURY'S STILL OUT

- Radiohead's pay-what-you-want model for pricing music
- More middle-class financial aid at elite colleges
- Congestion pricing
- Mandatory HPV vaccination for girls



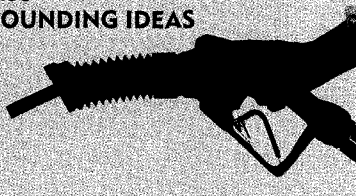
NEWLY CONVENTIONAL IDEAS WE USED TO THINK UNIMAGINABLE

- Viable nonwhite or nonmale presidential candidates
- Your dad on Facebook
- Tommy Lasorda, blogger
- \$100/barrel oil—what a bargain!
- *American Gladiators* is ripe for a comeback



LEAST HARMLESS INNOCUOUS-SOUNDING IDEAS

- Gas-tax holiday
- Business casual
- Greenwashing
- Electability



MYSAPCE POLITICS

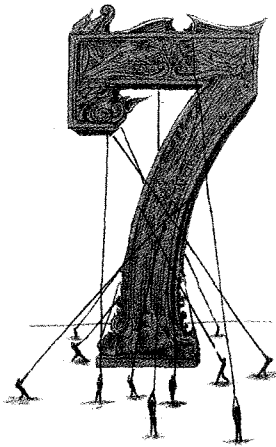
by Joshua Green

Not long ago, Barack Obama texted me to let me know he'd be on *The Daily Show* that night, chatting with Jon Stewart. He thought I might want to check it out. This wasn't unusual. Barack texts me all the time. To let me know where he's going to be the next day. To hook me up with friends. A lot of times, to try and bum money.

Obama's great innovation (emulated, with only limited effectiveness, by Hillary Clinton) has been to use technology—particularly the Web 2.0 social-networking model—to connect, organize, and inspire vast new swaths of voters, in the process amassing more campaign money than anyone in U.S. history. As a result, future presidential campaigns will resemble Obama's more than Bill Clinton's or George W. Bush's. Downloadable Obama ringtones may still seem like a novelty today. But by the time the next batch of presidential hopefuls kick off their campaigns (in, what, about six months?), you can bet they'll feature their own.



OBAMA/CLINTON: BRIAN SNYDER/REUTERS/CORBIS; GAS NOZZLE: AP PHOTO/RICK BOWMER; SODA CANS: JOHN DOMINIS/TIME & LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES; RADIOHEAD SCREEN CAPTURE: DAVID BRADY/CORBIS



THE RETURN OF REGULATION

by Clive Crook

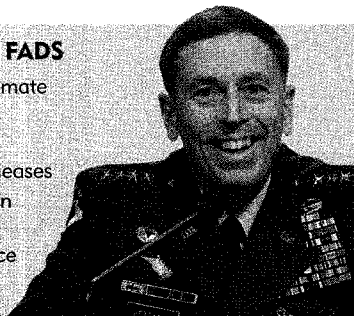
In the 1980s, Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher made deregulation a guiding theme of economic policy in America and Britain, and much of the world followed along. Businesses were given new freedoms. In many cases, if rules were deemed necessary, firms were invited to regulate themselves. This empowerment of the market was usually advantageous, sometimes bungled, and nearly always controversial—but for years the trend was mostly one-way.

Now a major rethink is under way. Regulatory failure in banking and “shadow banking” is widely seen—even by onetime proponents of the light touch—as a main cause of the subprime-mortgage meltdown. A Republican administration hitherto committed to deregulation is calling a halt, and in mortgage-lending is proposing new rules.

A Democratic administration, if the country gets one, will surely do more, and not just in finance. Advocates of stricter regulation worldwide will sound more credible, and champions of market forces less so. For years, what drove deregulation were good results (in most cases) and a sufficiently widespread presumption that the idea made sense. The subprime crisis has overturned both. Regulation is back.

MOST-WORRYING FADS

- Increasingly approximate airline arrival times
- Petraeus worship
- Vintage-sex-tape releases
- Vaccine avoidance in the name of health
- Monoglot intelligence services



PETRAEUS: STEFAN ZAKUN/ERA/COBBIS

PERSONAL GENOMICS

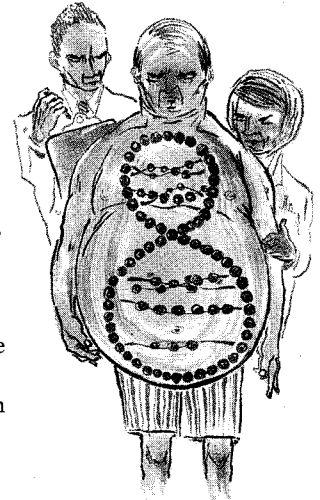
by Charles C. Mann

“In complete darkness we are all the same,” sang Janet Jackson. But the sage of *Rhythm Nation 1814* was wrong. At the genetic and cellular level, human beings are profoundly unlike. Wouldn’t it be wonderful to know how patients will react before giving them a pill?

Enter, please, the wonderful new world of personalized medicine. The idea is simple: ascertain a patient’s individual molecular makeup, then match that to a vast database of treatments to design a regime attuned to that person alone. Happily, researchers are furiously working to realize this vision. Not so happily, the private sector is also jumping in, even though huge amounts of research and testing still need to be done. And here and there, alas, a whiff of hucksterism is in the air.

The first personal-genomics start-ups—23andMe, Navigenics, Knome, deCODEme—launched in 2007. Clients pay a fee and spit into a vial to provide a few cells. The firms assay the DNA in those cells, looking for millions of tiny hereditary variations. Last year, for example, a French research team reported that breast-cancer patients with one of the two forms of the gene HER-2 responded differently to the new cancer drug trastuzumab (Herceptin).

Problem is, such successes are rare. Scientists have established huge numbers of links between particular diseases and snippets of DNA, but in the great majority of cases, this has not yet been translated into treatments that can help cure patients. These treatments will come—tomorrow, or the day after. Meanwhile, companies are opening their doors today, hoping to build their brands on the fears of the worried affluent. Good luck to them!



NOT BOMBING IRAN

by Jonathan Rauch

Same Iranian government as a year ago, as determined as ever to attain nuclear-weapons capability. Same U.S. government as a year ago, as determined as ever to keep nuclear-weapons capability out of Iran’s grasp.

Same essential facts, too. Iran is developing the capacity to enrich enough weapons-grade uranium for bombs. If anything, it has accelerated its efforts.

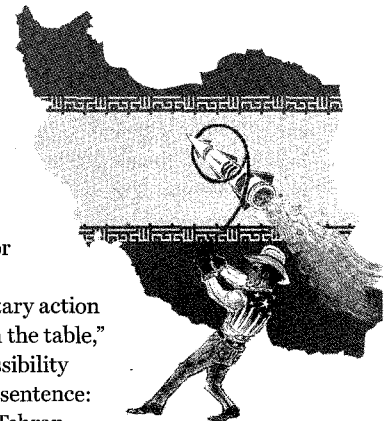
Yet everything has changed. A year ago, U.S. military action against Iran’s nuclear program seemed very much “on the table,” perhaps before President Bush left office; now the possibility seems remote. The reason is not a new fact but a new sentence:

“We judge with high confidence that in fall 2003, Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program.”

Those were the opening words of a National Intelligence Estimate that the Bush administration abruptly declassified and released in December. The world read: “Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program,” and the wind shifted into Iran’s sails.

The assessment went on to note, “Tehran at a minimum is keeping open the option to develop nuclear weapons.” Once Iran has weapons-grade uranium, building actual bombs will be little more than a formality—which is why the real problem remains, as it always has been, stopping Iran before it gets that far.

In short, the threat did not change; only the perception of the threat did. But threat-perception, in foreign policy, often matters more than threat-reality. Just ask an Iraqi.



CARBON CONSCIOUSNESS

by Megan McArdle

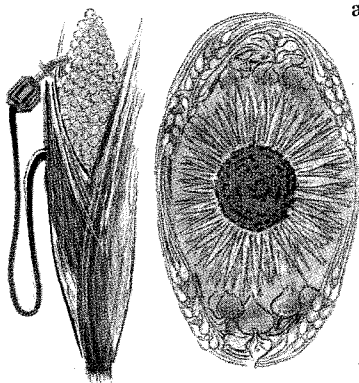
Hundreds of millions of years ago, tiny ocean creatures converted atmospheric and oceanic carbon into the organic stuff of their cells, and then sank to the sea floor, where eventually they turned into oil and natural gas. A similar process turned swamp plants into coal. These were the gifts of energy that powered the Industrial Revolution. In 2007, the Western world got serious about returning that gift for a refund.

Why now? In part because the science of global climate change has gotten harder to argue with. Also, it finally seems possible to break our carbon dependence without breaking our economy.

Although biofuels are looking more and more like a dead end—not least because they now appear to be taking food out of the mouths of the world's poorest people—there are a host of other promising developments. Market mechanisms like the European Union's cap-and-trade system, and private offset vendors, offer a minimally traumatic path to a lower-carbon lifestyle. Meanwhile, alternative technologies, from safer nuclear reactors to hybrid cars, are becoming more feasible. Silicon Valley and its private-equity

funders have started investing in green companies. Hollywood is also lending its money and, more important, its fame. Celebrities such as Tom Hanks and Natalie Portman have been featured in climate-change publicity campaigns.

But the best reason to go green is green, and it folds. Higher prices for oil and natural gas present an ugly dilemma. We can rely more heavily on coal, with its attendant heavy air pollution; or we can stop snapping carbon bonds to harvest their stored energy. Carbon will remain the building block of our bodies, but we can now—just barely—imagine a day when it will no longer be the cornerstone of our economy.



THE END OF 9/11

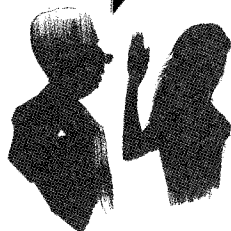
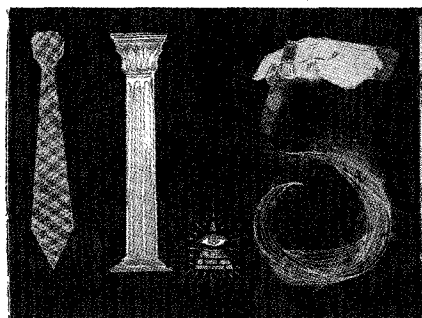
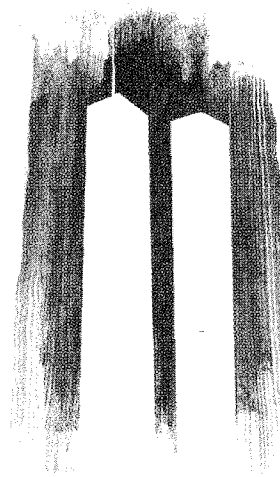
by James Fallows

On November 2, 2001, a driver on the Washington Beltway cut me off in traffic and gave someone else the finger. I remember the date because I thought, *The 9/11 era is over.*

In fact, the 9/11 era was both transitory and permanent. The political moment in which the United States could have done anything to address basic problems—notably, reliance on imported oil, which then cost about \$25 per barrel—was gone within six months. Other consequences of 9/11 will stay with us. It is hard to imagine when airline travel will be “normal” again, or when no American troops will serve in Iraq.

For several years after the attacks, saying that a policy or idea reflected “pre-9/11 thinking” could end the discussion. But by 2005, some people, mainly academics, began arguing carefully that too much alarm over possible terrorism could be self-defeating. They said that 9/11 was a moment of unprecedented shock for America but did not overturn every previous principle of how the United States should deal with other nations or preserve its own liberties.

Early last year, a British Cabinet member announced that his government would stop using the term *war on terror*, because it united and perversely dignified disparate terrorist groups. The U.S. electorate made essentially the same decision this year, in rejecting Rudy Giuliani's bid for the presidency. His approaches to economic, legal, and foreign-policy questions all began: “On 9/11 ...” Seven years afterward, that is no longer enough.



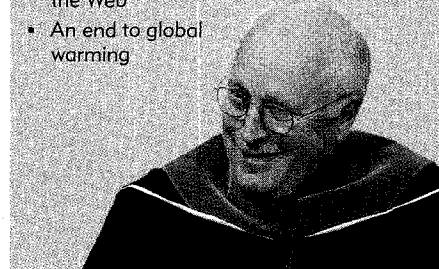
IT'S LONELY AT THE TOP

by Hanna Rosin

Exhibits A–G: Eliot Spitzer, Larry Craig, David Vitter, Kwame Kilpatrick, David Paterson, Antonio Villaraigosa, Vito Fossella ... **A**

MODEST PROPOSALS FOR THE YEAR TO COME

- Super-duper delegates for the Democratic Party
- Nationality-specific ethnic restaurants in all foreign embassies
- A Fulbright scholarship for Dick Cheney
- A weekly Sabbath from the Web
- An end to global warming



CHENEY: KAMIL KIZACINSKI/EPA/CORBIS

The Bose® QuietComfort® 2 Acoustic Noise Cancelling® Headphones.

Think of them as a peaceful getaway from the world around you. Whether it's the engine roar inside an airplane cabin, the bustle of the city or the distractions in the office, Bose QuietComfort 2 headphones help them fade softly into the background with the flick of a switch. You can savor delicate musical nuances without disturbing others. And



when you're not listening to music, you can slip into a tranquil haven – where you can relax and enjoy peace and solitude. Clearly, these are no ordinary headphones. It's no exaggeration to say they're one of those things you have to experience to believe.

"It's as if someone behind your back reached out, found the volume control for the world, and turned it way, way, down," reports *TechnologyReview.com*. Bose QC®2 headphones incorporate patented technology that electronically identifies and dramatically reduces noise, while faithfully preserving the music, movie dialogue or tranquility you desire. We designed these headphones primarily for airplane travelers. But owners soon started telling us how much they enjoy using them in other places to reduce distractions around them. They're excellent for listening to music whether you're on the go, at home or in the office.

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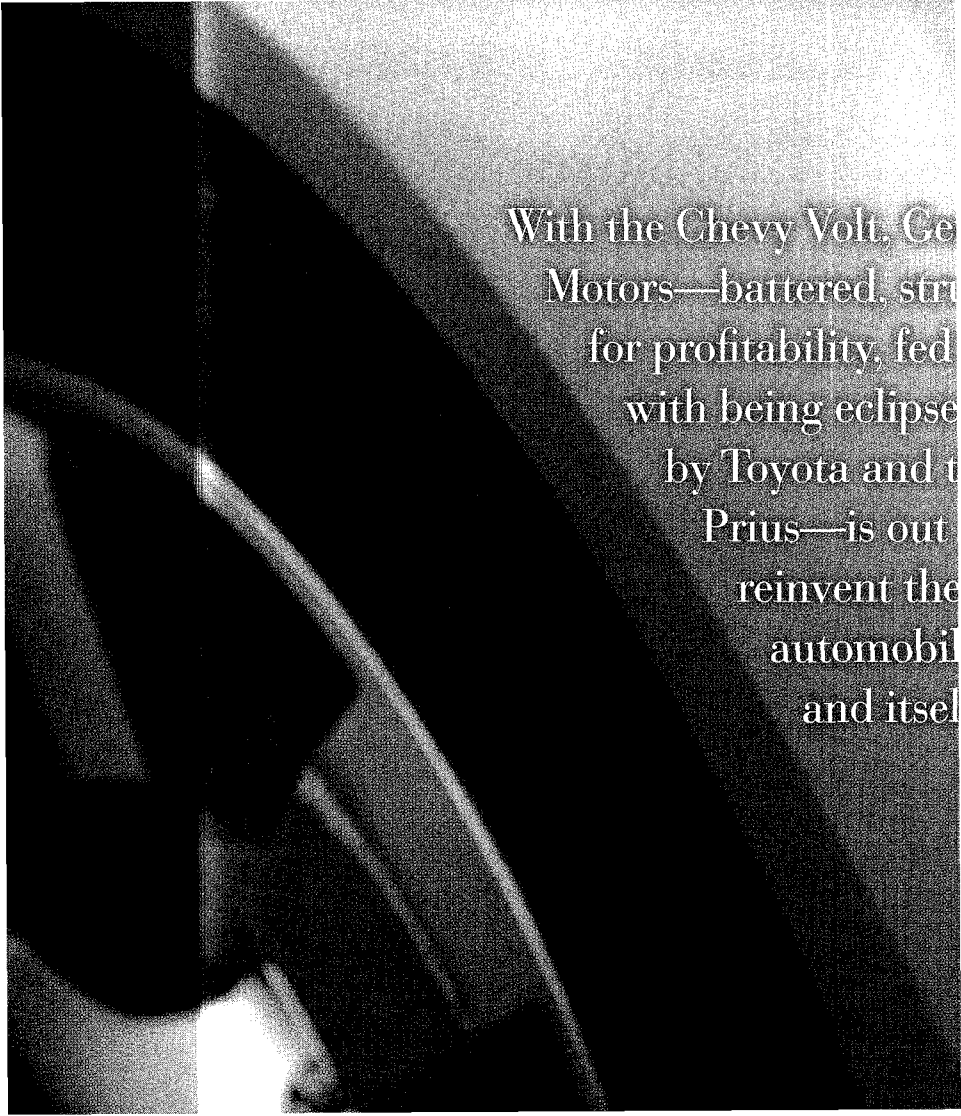
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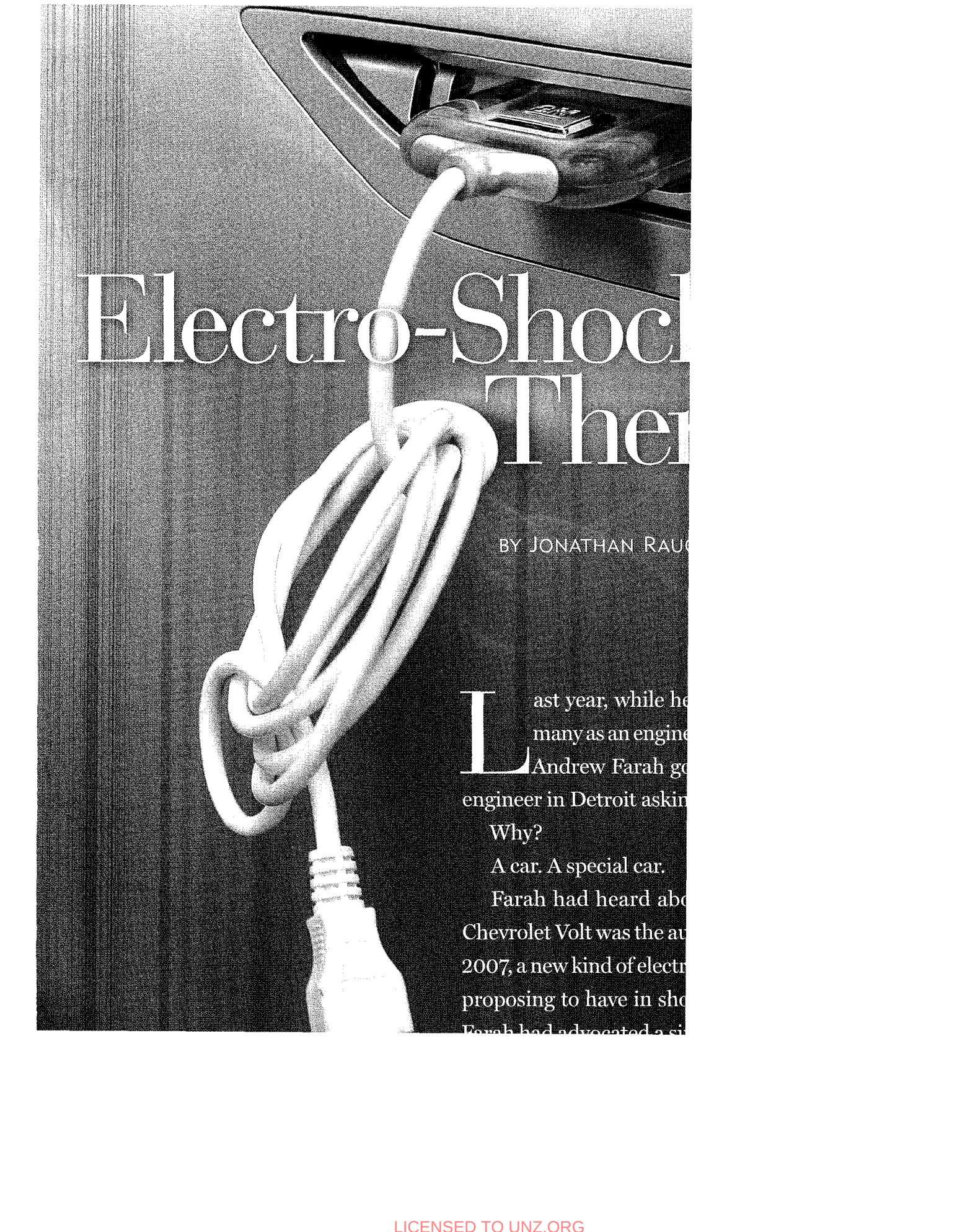
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With the Chevy Volt, General Motors—battered, struggling for profitability, fed up with being eclipsed by Toyota and the Prius—is out to reinvent the automobile and itself.



Electro-Shock Ther

BY JONATHAN RAUC

Last year, while he
many as an engine
Andrew Farah go
engineer in Detroit asking
Why?

A car. A special car.

Farah had heard abo
Chevrolet Volt was the au
2007, a new kind of electr
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Farah had advocated a si

on GM's EV1, an all-electric technological masterpiece that had done so poorly commercially that GM wound up crushing the cars amid a hail of public condemnation. Farah had been fiercely committed to the EV1, and he was not about to relive the disappointment.

"Hell, no," he said. "I've been on programs like this before. They're not real."

"No," came the reply. "This one is real." Farah asked to talk to other senior executives, and they concurred. So, in the spring of last year, he took one of the hardest jobs at GM, and became the Volt's chief engineer.

And how, I ask over coffee early one February morning in Detroit, is it going? It is 6 a.m., and Farah, who is 47 and has angular features and prominent black glasses, is rushing to make a 7 a.m. meeting. The car, he says, is 10 weeks behind the original schedule. Any more slip-page, and the 2010 deadline will be history. Even if no more time is lost, he will have only eight weeks to test the underbody, the car's structural base.

Is that enough time? He answers indirectly. In some cars, he says, testing the underbody can take a year.

GM, he tells me, is taking an industrial organization designed to grind out incremental improvements and repurposing it for a technological leap. "I spend 20 percent of my time being a psychologist and counselor," he says. "I tell people, 'Yes, there's a lot of risk. And, yes, that's OK.'"

"It's not a program for the faint of heart."

'THEY'RE MAKING A HUGE MISTAKE'

When one of the world's mightiest corporations throws everything it's got at a project, and when it shreds its rule book in the process, the results are likely to be impressive. Still, even for General Motors, the Volt is a reach. If it meets specifications, it will charge up overnight from any standard electrical socket. It will go 40 miles on a charge. Then a small gasoline engine will ignite. The engine's sole job will be to drive a generator, whose sole job will be to maintain the battery's charge—not to drive the wheels, which will never see anything but electricity. In generator mode, the car will drive hundreds of miles on a tank of gas, at about 50 miles per gallon. But about three-fourths of Americans commute less than 40 miles a day, so on most days most Volt drivers would use no gas at all.

Because it will have both an electric and a gasoline motor on board, the Volt will be a hybrid. But it will be like no hybrid on the road today. Existing hybrids are gasoline-powered cars, with an electric assist to improve the gas mileage. The Volt will be an electric-powered car, with a gasoline assist to increase the battery's range.

Electric drive is as old as the automobile itself. Anyone who has ridden in a golf cart has experienced it. Compared with the fire-breathing internal combustion engine, an electric motor is simple, quiet, and clean, and it provides

marvelous acceleration and torque. For a century, though, the deal-breaker has been the battery. Any battery with nearly enough power to drive a full-size car was prohibitively large and heavy, prohibitively expensive, unable to go more than a few miles on a charge, or (usually) all of the above. Only recently has the advent of lithium-ion batteries brought a full-range electric car into the realm of the practical. Even so, the battery for the Volt doesn't yet exist, at least not at a mass-market price, and building it poses formidable challenges. Loading enough energy into a sufficiently small, lightweight package is hard (the battery isn't much good unless it fits in the car); keeping it cool lest it burst into flames is harder; making it durable enough to last 10 years on bumpy roads is harder yet; manufacturing it in high volumes and at mass-market prices may be hardest of all.

Given the challenges, standard procedure dictates first building and testing the battery, and only then designing a car around it. That process, however, would take until 2012 or 2013—time GM does not have if it wants to beat Toyota. The only hope of meeting the 2010 deadline is to invent the battery while simultaneously designing the car. Just-in-time inventory is common now in the car business, but just-in-time invention on the Volt's scale is new to GM and probably to the modern automotive industry.

Many in the industry will tell you there's a good reason car companies don't do things this way. Toyota, which is proceeding much more cautiously with its own plug-in car, has made no secret of its belief that neither GM nor anyone else can keep the Volt's promises. When I called Menahem Anderman, a prominent battery consultant in California, he said the lithium-ion battery will be expensive—far too expensive to make sense as a business proposition as long as gas is \$3 or \$4 a gallon. ("At \$10 a gallon we can have a different discussion.") Its life is unproven, and unprovable in the short time GM has allotted. To deliver tens of thousands of vehicles in 2010, Anderman said, "they should have had hundreds of them already driving around for two or three years. *Hundreds*. Not everybody can say it publicly, but everybody in the high-volume industry is saying, 'What are they thinking about?'" An executive with a GM competitor, after making some of the same points, offered forthrightness in exchange for anonymity: "They're making a huge mistake."

The people at GM understand very well the reasons they're not supposed to do what they're doing. They offer a variety of retorts. Batteries will improve and get cheaper. Gas prices will rise. They have two decades' worth of experience with electric drive. They have smart algorithms to test the battery. Strict new fuel-economy standards will vindicate the business case. But, at bottom, what they say is that the challenge is part of the point. They have something to prove.

In conversations with everyone from staff engineers to Rick Wagoner, the chairman and CEO, I heard references to the Apollo program. "John Kennedy didn't say, 'Let's go to the moon and, you know, we'll get there as soon as we can,'" Wagoner said in a recent interview in his office, atop a high-rise in Detroit. "I asked our experts, 'Guys, do we have a reasonable chance of making it or not?' Yes. 'Well, then, let's go for what we want rather than go for what we know we can do.'" With the Volt, GM—battered,

minivans and SUVs took off, GM was caught unprepared. In the early part of this decade, it decided hybrids were too unprofitable to pursue, leaving a gap in the market that Toyota, with its Prius, brilliantly and mercilessly exploited. By the time GM recognized its blunder and launched its own hybrids, Toyota dominated the field.

GM also had problems with high health-care and manufacturing costs, expensive union contracts, excess capacity, poor quality, lackluster designs. Its public image



MR. ENVIRONMENT? Vice Chairman Bob Lutz, who pushed hard for the Volt, with part of his personal fleet

beleaguered, struggling for profitability—hopes to re-engineer not just the car but the way the public thinks about cars, the way the public thinks about GM, and the way GM thinks about itself.

'THAT COULD HAVE BEEN US'

The company turns 100 this year, but amid the birthday celebrations it can expect a slap in the face: in 2008 GM is likely to be demoted to No. 2 among the world's carmakers. Memories of past glory make being overtaken by Toyota all the more galling. In the 1950s and 1960s, GM poured forth a stream of innovations in design and technology. In the 1960s, it manufactured nearly 60 percent of the cars sold in America. Then, of course, the Japanese arrived, the energy crisis hit, and GM began to look like the company that never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity. In the 1970s, when gas prices rose, GM proved incapable of building a decent small car. In the 1980s, when the Japanese redefined quality, GM failed to respond, because its brands were competing against each other instead of the imports. In the 1990s, when

got so bad that focus groups liked the company's cars better when the logo was removed. In 2005, GM lost \$8.6 billion and saw its bonds downgraded to junk rating. Analysts were speculating about bankruptcy.

Adding insult to injury, the prominent acquisition of Hummer in 1999 had made GM a poster child for environmental irresponsibility, even as Toyota and the Prius piled up accolades for eco-friendliness. "We looked at the Prius and the masterful job of positioning and public relations Toyota did with that," Steve Harris, GM's top PR executive, says, "and we thought, *That could have been us.*"

The combination of bad news and worse publicity created a sense of emergency. "Everyone's thinking the same thing: *We've got to turn this thing around.*" one executive told me. "We've got to get our mojo back on advanced technology. The PR guys want something more sexy and dramatic, a singular point for our message. This issue of the environmental image was hurting the company substantially." Playing it safe looked paradoxically more dangerous than taking a gamble. The company was conductive to a high-voltage jolt, and Bob Lutz provided the spark.

'BATTERIES ON THE BRAIN'

After a storied career at GM, BMW, Ford, and Chrysler, Lutz returned to GM in 2001, as vice chairman, to reinvigorate its droopy product line. He is not the first person you might expect to bend GM's will toward politically correct propulsion. For one thing, he is not what you would call green. A tall, gravel-voiced former Marine pilot in his 70s, he has a carbon footprint approximately the size of Delaware, thanks to his 16 classic cars and eight motorcycles and two helicopters and two military-surplus fighter jets (which he flies). He relishes his cigar-chomping, fast-driving image, and scoffs at any notion that he has converted to environmentalism. A few months ago, while GM was busy trying to improve its environmental image, he couldn't stop himself from telling reporters that global warming is a "total crock of shit."

But Lutz is also, as he has described himself, "a walking contradiction." He is trilingual (English, French, and German), the sophisticated product of an elite upbringing in both Switzerland and America, and he spent years successfully working in Europe, where gas is expensive and cars are small. Like many of GM's top executives nowadays, he is convinced that dependence on a single, increasingly

electric concept car for the 2007 Detroit auto show, a year away. The car had to be more than just interesting, he said. It had to be remarkable: a game-changer.

'RISK IS MY FRIEND'

Lauckner, 50, is vice president of global program management, which puts him in charge of moving vehicles through GM's new-product pipeline. His father and grandfather worked for GM. Although he has a Stanford management degree, Lauckner is an engineer to the core. Ask him why he is so sure the Volt is doable, and he is likely to say, "I work in power train!" He sees the Volt as an engineering problem that, with enough determination, can be broken down and solved. He also thinks engineers do their best work when asked to stretch, and the further the better. "Risk is my friend," he once told me. "I like risk. You either go big or go home."

In February 2006, Lauckner pulled together a brainstorming team that included, unusually, a public-relations man, Chris Preuss. Then just turning 40, Preuss was a Chrysler veteran who had come to GM in the late 1990s and discovered a depressingly hidebound organization. Things had improved since then, but not enough for

The brainstorming group did not pull punches with the top leadership. GM had to show a real change of mind on the environment and sustainability or remain Toyota's doormat.

problematic fuel, gasoline, has become the auto industry's Achilles' heel. Plug-in cars run on as many different fuels as the electricity plants that charge them: coal, methane, nuclear, hydro, and wind, and potentially solar, biofuels, and garbage—but almost never Saudi or Venezuelan oil. This suits Lutz, a hawk on energy security. "The one thing I care about is getting off imported oil," he told me in December, over dinner in Detroit. And, as it happens, his last stop before GM was the chairmanship of Exide, a battery company. There, he became fascinated with electric drive.

When he returned, Lutz had, as a GM engineer recalls, "batteries on the brain." He nagged and he nagged, but the company pushed back. The EV1 had been a commercial flop and a public-relations fiasco, and no one wanted to go back down that road. Then, in late 2005, Lutz got wind that a Silicon Valley start-up, Tesla Motors, was moving toward production of a high-performance electric roadster. (It's available this year, if you have \$100,000.) At that point, Lutz "just lost it," as he puts it. He refused to accept that a small start-up company could build and sell an electric car but mighty GM couldn't. In early 2006, he summoned Jon Lauckner and told him to dream up an

Preuss. While Lutz was agitating for electric drive, Preuss had been arguing that GM needed a breakthrough product in the mold of the iPod. "Apple Computer was almost on its last breath," Preuss says. "Once the iPod hit, all the other things they had suddenly looked relevant again."

That March, the group laid its conclusions before Rick Wagoner and the rest of the top leadership. Preuss and Larry Burns, who runs the company's research operations and is regarded in the industry as something of a visionary, did not pull punches. GM had to show a real change of mind on the environment and sustainability or remain Toyota's doormat. It had to lead on plug-ins or get left behind in yet another new market. It had to restore credibility damaged by the mishandling of the EV1, the abdication on hybrids, and the repeated failure to deliver on promises. It needed not just one more in a long series of research programs and concept cars but a real-world product, one ambitious enough to impress even the cynics.

The group proposed a plug-in that would drive at least 10 miles on a charge. It would be a cool, stylish, high-tech car, marketed to trendsetters. They called it the iCar.

The senior leadership green-lighted the project. Burns left the meeting feeling euphoric.

Lauckner's engineers, meanwhile, were struggling with the battery problem. With anything like an affordable battery, an all-electric car would lack the range consumers expect. But a Prius-style hybrid, however well executed, would amount to a mere me-too. The solution turned up in the form of a rediscovery. In the early 1990s, engineers testing the EV1 had been vexed by its limited range. After 60 miles or so on the test track, they would have to wait hours for the car to recharge. So they rigged up a motorcycle engine, connected it to a generator, and connected that to the battery. Now the car recharged itself while driving. Some of the engineers—among them, Andrew Farah—thought this was a nifty arrangement and pressed to develop it. A few years later, GM put an onboard recharger in an EV1 show car.

And that was as far as the idea got. It elicited zero interest, because in the 1990s, policy makers and car companies were focused on zero emissions—that is, on cars that burn no gas at all. By 2006, however, all of that had changed. Thanks to the Prius, the market was brisk for hybrids, and the public seemed receptive to a plug-in car; but Toyota and Honda were pooh-poohing plug-in technology as unready for prime time. GM's brainstormers thought they saw a gap in the Japanese line and relished the thought of doing to Toyota what Toyota had done to them. After a sometimes heated debate, they decided the iCar would be the lineal descendant of that once-orphaned test car.

'IT WAS COMPLETELY BACKWARDS'

The company then made a series of decisions that look, in hindsight, startlingly audacious. Instead of becoming a safer bet as it ran the internal slalom, the iCar became more ambitious. Its target range on a single charge increased from "at least" 10 miles to 40—the outer limit of what seemed possible. Not a few outsiders think this decision was misguided; a 20-mile battery, say, would still allow many commuters to drive gas-free most days, and it would be easier and cheaper to build. But Lauckner, always pushing, insisted on a car that the public would perceive not just as saving gasoline (that was Prius territory) but as replacing gasoline. The Volt, as the iCar was eventually renamed, had to be perceived as severing the umbilical cord between the car and the gas pump, and nothing less than the longest feasible gas-free range, he believed, would accomplish that.

Yet this adventurous car would be branded Chevrolet. Chevy is GM's biggest brand, and the only brand it sells everywhere it does business. The last time GM tried for a big breakthrough, in the 1980s, it avoided the Chevy brand, instead creating a new division under a new name (Saturn). This time, GM was proposing to tie its core brand to an untested technology. "If we want to make a

big difference with this," Wagoner told me, "we have to do this with a big brand."

Producing a high-end statement car for trendsetters, as Tesla is doing, would have been pretty safe, but positioning the Volt as affordable family transportation—Chevy's bread and butter—is an order of magnitude harder. It implies selling not thousands but hundreds of thousands of cars, and at Chevrolet rather than Cadillac prices. The battery alone is likely to cost something in the high four figures. At Chevy prices, GM can expect to lose money on every Volt it sells, at least in the early going, and possibly for years.

Outflanking Toyota makes good sense strategically, but GM's market capitalization is less than a tenth of Toyota's. Unless battery costs fall as quickly as GM hopes, the car could break the bank by succeeding.

Perhaps most audacious of all was a decision to allow unusual public access to the Volt program. The industry's standard procedure is to develop new products, especially risky ones, out of sight, unveiling them only when proven. GM decided to do exactly the opposite. The PR department flung open the doors. GM executives discuss the program's progress as publicly as if it were a bill in Congress. They show off photos of batteries under development. They promise to let reporters ride in test cars. They lead them through the labs and design centers and even into the wind tunnel. They run ads, for instance in this magazine, touting the Volt in the present tense, as if it already existed. By earlier this year, expectations were so high that President Bush was commending the car, and it had developed a national grassroots following. This article is itself a product of the fishbowl strategy.

GM is using the publicity to excite the public, of course. It is also using the publicity to push itself. "We thought it would be a motivating thing to do," Wagoner says. "Certainly it gets everybody aligned"—not always easy in a giant corporation. And GM wants credit for trying, which it never received for the EV1. "If it fails," Harris says of the Volt, "we want people to know exactly why it failed. It wasn't lack of commitment or passion on our part; we hit a hard point we couldn't get around."

On the other hand, if it fails, it will fail in full view. GM will have given its critics the most spectacular example yet of a broken promise, and Toyota will look prudent instead of timid.

Each of these decisions was ambitious; together, they amounted to an all-in commitment. The company hoped to make a splash with the Volt at the concept car's unveiling in January 2007, at the Detroit auto show. Even so, executives were stunned by the public's reaction. GM won both North American Car and Truck of the Year, but the enthusiasm created by the Volt completely eclipsed that news. "We were pumped for something big," Wagoner says, "but this was a lot bigger."

Riding the wave of euphoria following the show, GM's board of directors urged the project on. Although GM had made no formal decision to produce the Volt, what had begun as an experiment was coming to be regarded inside the company as destined. Momentum built still further that spring, as GM began staffing the project with dozens of its ablest engineers—people like Andrew Farah, plucked on short notice from whatever it was they were doing, anywhere in the world.

The pencil pushers had done none of the marketing and cost studies that typically precede a product launch, but no matter. Normally, Bob Lutz says, “you basically define the whole future of the car on paper before you give the go-ahead to start spending some serious engineering and design money on it. And in this case it was completely backwards. We saw that we had a smash hit that hugely resonated with the public, and we just decided: let's go to work. No business case, but let's get this thing into production-ready form, and we'll worry about the cost and investment and the profitability later.”

If GM was seeking to seize the world's attention and upstage Toyota, it had succeeded, spectacularly. But now it had to build the car.

'I'M ALL GIDDY'

Lance Turner is 43, of medium height, with a thatch of brown hair and a soft, round face commandeered by heavy, square glasses. Like many at the heart of the Volt project, Turner is a gearhead, the sort of person who gets excited by a histogram of cell voltages. (Don't ask.) GM is full of people who have labored for years on advanced-technology concept cars and test vehicles—“science projects,” in the company vernacular—with no prospect of seeing their handiwork reach showrooms. For them, the Volt is a jailbreak. Turner, an electrical engineer who worked on the ill-starred EV1 and a series of forgotten electric concept cars with names like Precept (bad name for a car) and Impact (even worse), woke up one morning to find himself in the middle of GM's busiest intersection. He is the guy testing the battery.

“It's swim. I already know,” Turner told me, when I asked if the battery was likely to sink or swim. This was during a visit in December to GM's mile-square technical center in Warren, Michigan, just outside Detroit. Volt development is going on both here and in Germany, allowing for around-the-clock testing. The battery lab, an expansive but otherwise unimpressive room containing test chambers and consoles with digital readouts, clearly had not been dressed up for visiting journalists, of whom I was only the latest. “Before I'd even started the project, we'd opened up the lab to 50 reporters that came in,” Turner told me, sounding bemused. “You're not allowed to bring a camera or a cell phone into this building. Here we were with a TV crew.”

During this visit, I found the technical center brimming with optimism, and the battery lab was no exception. One of two suppliers, a company called Compact Power (a subsidiary of a big South Korean chemical and advanced-materials company, LG Chem), had delivered two copies of its version of the battery, and on the bench they were testing brilliantly. “They may not look beautiful,” Turner said—the battery was a six-foot-long T-shaped object from which wires, clamps, and circuit boards protruded—“but as far as the data goes, they're the best I've worked with.” Heat is a problem with lithium-ion batteries, but this one was staying cool even when run hard—and the cooling system had yet to be attached.

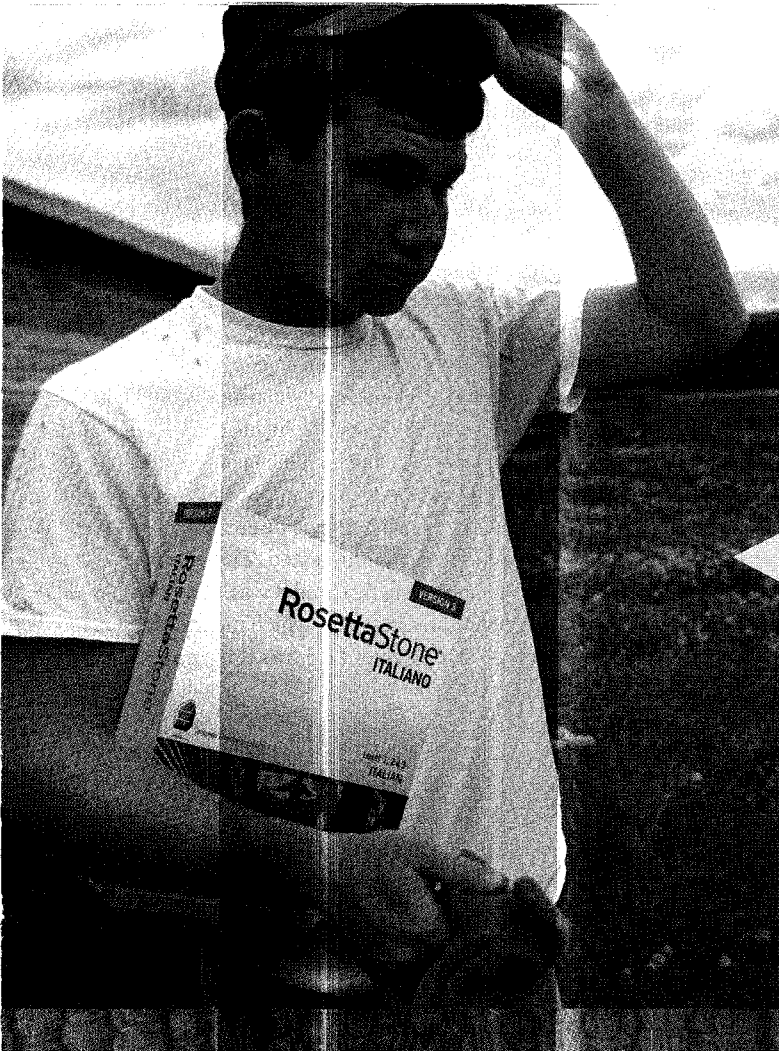
Moreover, improvements were being incorporated as fast as they could be conceived; the battery would be on its second generation in January, its third in June. “It's incredible,” Turner said. “The design they've come up with for thermal changed 10 times *before* they delivered the first battery.” And all of this was before the arrival of a competing battery that might be as good or even better, designed jointly by the Massachusetts-based company A123 Systems and the German company Continental A.G. “We're inventing and creating on the critical path,” Turner said. He was using the industry jargon for the countdown to production, when time is money and delays can cost millions. “I've got guys trying to release things before they're actually invented.”

As I got ready to go, Turner pointed to a laptop wired to the battery. “I'm testing as I'm talking to you,” he said. “It's working great. I'm all giddy.”

'THERE IS NO NEXT WEEK'

The news was just as good in the Volt's design studio, a repurposed auditorium. Designers sat in cubicles on the stage, an aptly theatrical touch for so publicity-conscious a car. A mural proclaimed the program's goals, one of which was “Radically Shifts GM's Public Perceptions.” On the main floor was a full-size model of the car, hidden under a blue tarp. As a rule, car companies go to great lengths to hide their developmental designs, and so I was surprised when my handler ordered the model disrobed: even by Volt standards, this was exceptional access. The model looked rounder and smoother than the aggressively sporty show car, and for good reason: to squeeze 40 miles out of its battery, the Volt will need to be the most aerodynamically efficient car GM has ever built.

Here, as in the battery lab, work was proceeding rapidly. The design, though still evolving, was already 98 percent there, Bob Boniface, the Volt's design director, told me. “We've taken more than half a year out of the schedule,” he said. Ordinarily, if you had a problem with a taillight, you might schedule a meeting for the next week. “With this, there is no next week.”



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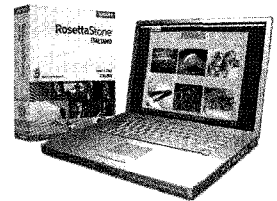
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Early on, word had come down from Bob Lutz and Jon Lauckner that standard procedure was suspended where the Volt was concerned. "You guys are not going to be held to the normal GM bureaucracy," Lutz recalls saying. "You guys spend money when you need to spend it. You have a problem, call us on the phone." Engineers, designers, and executives were told to trust their instincts and make decisions on the spot. If a larger issue crops up, it is taken to a special Volt steering committee, and Lutz, Lauckner, and the key company vice presidents settle it before leaving the room.

"Whenever I have a problem, it is resolved within days," Frank Weber, who manages the Volt project, told me. "Within days! One call, and things happen immediately." Weber, a 41-year-old German import from GM's Opel

he was having any fun, perhaps not the most delicate of questions, he said, "There's a fair amount of camaraderie in the misery of being tired." Had he had a vacation? He couldn't remember just then. "I'm going to take one," he said, not all that convincingly.

And how was the project going? "I'd had nothing but phenomenal testing experiences last time you were here," he replied. "This time I'm more humbled." He led me into a temperature-controlled chamber, where one of the batteries was hooked up to a tangle of tubes filled with clear orange fluid. It looked like an intensive-care patient. The cooling system was being tested. The engineers had expected this to be a challenge, and it was. The system was leaking both fluid and electricity, which meant it could not yet be installed in a test car. Nor was the competing bat-

Word came down from top management that standard procedure was suspended where the Volt was concerned:
'You guys spend money when you need to.
You have a problem, call us on the phone.'

division in Europe, is precise, organized, unflappable, as if German-engineered himself. One morning, when the steering group heard that the battery was running behind schedule, a senior production executive said to Weber, "Tell us what you need." By early that afternoon, the two of them were enlisting more engineers.

'SUDDENLY, PLAYTIME IS OVER'

At the end of February, when I returned to the technical center, the picture looked different. December's ebullience had given way to a sense of strain that was evident even to a tourist. "We currently are at the limit of our stretch," one senior battery engineer told me. He was just back from a week's skiing in Colorado, where he had sought escape, but where for three nights the battery had intruded on his dreams. "Three nights, and I could only think about that battery!"

The Volt had moved from the late stages of conception to the early stages of execution. The personnel count had more than doubled, to 500 or so. They were now out of the sunny foothills and beginning the craggy ascent. Unpleasant surprises and resource limitations and aggressive deadlines and the laws of physics were biting. "Suddenly," Weber told me, "playtime is over."

In the battery lab, I found Lance Turner visibly exhausted. As we talked in a cluttered office, where he sat in front of a blackboard covered with scribbled graphs and equations as if out of a mad-scientist cartoon, he kept removing his glasses to massage his eyes. When I asked if

tery robust enough to drive around. Originally expected by Easter, test cars, the crucial proof, would not be on the road before May.

"We're counting on home runs every single time, and quite frankly, we're hitting doubles right now," Turner said, as I watched diodes on the battery's control circuits flash green. It seemed, he added wearily, that there were not enough hours in the day.

'COSMIC PROPORTIONS'

Of course, what I wondered is what everyone wonders: Can GM pull this off? Whenever I asked this question inside the company, I got one or another version of the same answer: "Failure is not an option." Today's GM, though not out of trouble, is off the critical list, thanks to a landmark labor agreement, reduced costs, and some widely acclaimed new cars; and the company now has hybrid and ethanol programs to fall back on if the Volt fails. Still, everyone agreed that failure on the Volt, real or perceived, would be a severe setback. And General Motors has tried moon shots before.

In the early 1980s, humiliated by its inability to build a car that met the Japanese challenge, GM announced a new program to create a space-age small car that would leapfrog the Japanese and, in the process, reinvent GM's business model. It would be an effort of "cosmic proportions," as the CEO in those days, Roger Smith, put it. The name—Saturn—recalled the space program. The development team was given free rein and \$5 billion. "By 1985, the Sat-

STARVED FOR SCIENCE

How Biotechnology Is Being Kept Out of Africa

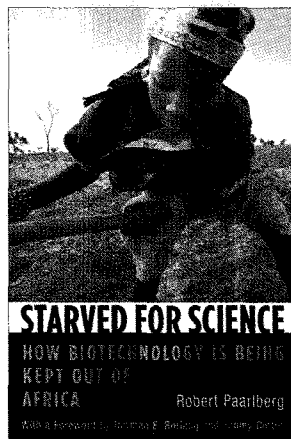
ROBERT PAARLBERG

FOREWORD BY NORMAN BORLAUG AND JIMMY CARTER

"Condoning the cultivation of genetically modified crops for food is not, Paarlberg concedes, likely to win him friends in academic circles... But in this timely book... he calls on global policymakers to renew investment in agricultural science and to stop imposing visions of 'organic food purity' on a continent that has never had a green revolution."

—Jenny Wiggins,
FINANCIAL TIMES

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IN PURSUIT OF THE GENE

From Darwin to DNA

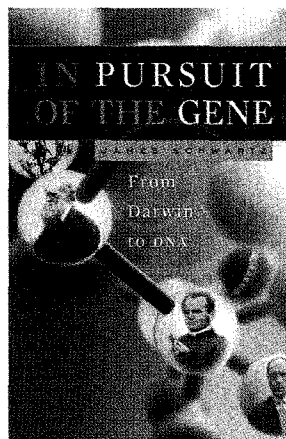
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"Understanding the nature of genetic inheritance was essential for evolution to be accepted as the dominant paradigm in biology. In a masterful work, science writer Schwartz looks at the science and the personali-

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—PUBLISHERS WEEKLY
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MEAN AND LOWLY THINGS

Snakes, Science, and Survival in the Congo

KATE JACKSON

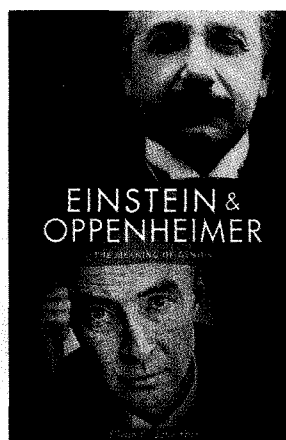
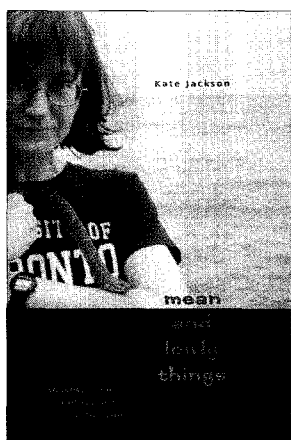
"Herpetologist Jackson is candid, funny, and precise as she chronicles her demanding and illuminating experiences collecting snakes, frogs, and toads in the flooded forests of the Congo."

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"A fascinating, adventure-filled memoir."

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EINSTEIN AND OPPENHEIMER

The Meaning of Genius

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"You'd be forgiven for thinking there is little we don't know already about Einstein and Oppenheimer. Yet this book plots the lives of the 20th century's most

charismatic physicists to a greater end than biography... Schweber's depth of analysis... insists that there is much more to learn about each."

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urn project had become a giant media event, propelled by a steady stream of tantalizing announcements from Roger Smith's office," Maryann Keller, a prominent automotive analyst, wrote in her 1989 book on GM, *Rude Awakening*. "With the promise of Saturn, the world was suddenly Roger Smith's oyster." The start-up moved at breakneck

FROM A WINDOW

Incurable and unbelieving
In any truth but the truth of grieving,

I saw a tree inside a tree
Rise kaleidoscopically

As if the leaves had livelier ghosts.
I pressed my face as close

To the pane as I could get
To watch that fitful, fluent spirit

That seemed a single being undefined
Or countless beings of one mind

Haul its strange cohesion
Beyond the limits of my vision

Over the house heavenwards.
Of course I knew those leaves were birds.

Of course that old tree stood
Exactly as it had and would

(But why should it seem fuller now?)
And though a man's mind might endow

Even a tree with some excess
Of life to which a man seems witness,

That life is not the life of men.
And that is where the joy came in.

—CHRISTIAN WIMAN

Christian Wiman's most recent book is *Ambition and Survival: Becoming a Poet* (2007). He is the editor of *Poetry* magazine.

speed, growing from six people to 800 in the first year; it designed and built an all-new car in three years, Japan-fast and twice GM's normal pace. The car was popular, the new production system and dealer network even more so: by 1992, there were waiting lists for Saturns.

And then Saturn withered. The cars sold well but struggled to break even, and GM's union and bureaucracy pushed back against the division's organizational privileges. Instead of nurturing and growing Saturn, GM merged it into the larger organizational blob and then neglected it. What was supposed to have been a tonic for the corporate culture became another victim of it. Only recently has Saturn gotten back on its feet.

GM's history of great leaps forward dates to its founder, William Durant, who was known for his sometimes impulsive style. "Mr. Durant would proceed on a course of action guided solely, as far as I could tell, by some intuitive flash of brilliance," his legendary successor, Alfred Sloan, once wrote. "He never felt obliged to make an engineering hunt for facts." In the 1980s and 1990s, the company fought stagnation and decline with a series of what it hoped would be breakthroughs: a joint venture with Toyota in the early 1980s; acquisitions of two high-tech companies; a spending spree on robots and other advanced manufacturing technology; Saturn; the EV1. Some, like the acquisitions and the program to replace humans with robots (which ended up painting each other instead of the cars), failed outright. Others, like the joint venture, Saturn, and the EV1, yielded opportunities that GM failed to exploit.

History suggests that the largest dangers for the Volt are not technological but organizational and commercial. Will GM have the focus and creativity to market such an unconventional car? Will it have the doggedness, and the cash, to weather the inevitable commercial setbacks and financial losses? To judge solely from history, the odds are not great.

'HE WAS A FOLLOWER'

On the other hand, GM is not the company it was in the 1980s and 1990s. "There's a generational change in GM," Maryann Keller, who has tracked GM since the early 1970s, told me recently. "There's a generation of managers who never knew the rich GM. These are people who are bruised and battered. These are the kind of people who can make change." (And the worm turns: Toyota is now run by a generation that has known only success.)

GM, once notoriously smug, today is a hungry company. Its executives and engineers will recount, at the drop of a hat, the great technologies and cars that GM has fathered. They want some of that glory back. They know the world expects them to fail, and that makes them all the hungrier. "The empire strikes back," is how one executive sums up the Volt's effect on morale.

Rick Wagoner, the CEO, is a GM lifer who joined the company fresh out of Harvard Business School in 1977, and he knows his history. "Making big bets is not something this company has been averse to," he told me. GM's downfall has been in execution and follow-through, not ambition. "If I've learned anything over the past three or four years," Wagoner said, it's that "a lot of this business is sticking with it and persistence. In the coaching vernacular, we're going to leave it on the floor to make this happen."

My own feeling, just a reporter's guess, is that battery glitches have reduced the odds of GM's having the Volt in showrooms by late 2010, but advances in the underlying technology have increased the odds of its producing the Volt early in the decade. In other words, delay on the order of months is looking more likely, but delay on the order of years is looking less likely. I'd also guess that the car's sticker price will be higher than GM initially hoped, maybe north of \$35,000.

How much the calendar and the price matter will depend on the competition. Despite its head start, GM will have to fight to be first. In January, after a year of watching GM bask in the Volt's publicity, Toyota reacted. At the

But the real answer was the grin that spread across his face as he recalled Watanabe's announcement and said, savoring each syllable, "He was a *follower*."

'I JUST WANT TO BE A PART OF THIS'

In late March, at the New York auto show, I checked back in with Andrew Farah, the Volt's chief engineer, and asked for an update. "Still just as bad as before," he said. When I mentioned that another executive had said the underbody was a well-proven design that didn't need much testing, he shot me a look of disbelief. "There's a big gaping hole down the center of this car where the battery goes."

All around us, at the Chevrolet stand, a crowd was forming. Volt fans from as far away as Arizona, Colorado, and California had made the pilgrimage to question the team about the car.

"Maybe what we're going to learn out of this isn't some technological thing," Farah said. "Maybe what we're learning is to be more comfortable with a higher level of risk." I asked if he did feel comfortable with the risks the program was taking. He thought for a moment. "I realize there's no other way to do it, so I am comfortable with it." Was

Glancing at the concept car on the dais, I realized I was looking at the Barack Obama of automobiles— everyone's hope for change.

2008 Detroit auto show, Katsuaki Watanabe, the president, announced that Toyota would produce a lithium-ion plug-in car of its own, and would have it on the street in test fleets "not at the end of 2010, but earlier than that." Toyota was talking about a few hundred experimental cars in a controlled setting, not tens of thousands of cars in dealer showrooms, a much less ambitious goal than GM's. But Toyota is famous for under-promising and over-delivering.

In February, Tesla, the Silicon Valley company, announced plans for an electric sedan with a gasoline-powered generator, like the Volt—but set to arrive a year earlier, in late 2009. In March, BMW said it might produce an electric car for the U.S. market, and in May, Nissan said it would have one in test fleets in 2010. The drumbeat seems likely to continue. Simply by announcing the Volt, GM has attracted a bevy of competitors, bringing the electric car's mass-market advent from over the horizon to around the corner.

GM's leaders, needless to say, do not particularly welcome the competition from a business point of view. But they relish it from a psychological one. When I asked Larry Burns, the R&D vice president, how he felt about Toyota's plans, he said, "Paranoid, because they're good."

he holding up under the pressure? He thought again. "It's my job to hold up."

As the event began, I melted into the crowd. Next to me was a 23-year-old grad student who thought the car was historic; next to him, a 21-year-old network engineer who said he loved the car and would buy one now if he could; next to him, a 59-year-old foreman (and grandfather) who said, "I just want to be a part of this." None of them were car people or GM people, at least not before the Volt. Glancing at the concept car on the dais, I realized I was looking at the Barack Obama of automobiles—everyone's hope for change.

At the podium, Bob Lutz was saying, "I think the whole company has now learned the lesson that when you set out and do bold things, you win, and when you're cautious and let someone else do the bold things, you lose." The crowd applauded warmly. A voice called out, "You're absolutely right, Bob!"

Lutz said, "It may be years before we make a dime on this product. Years! And the board said, 'Don't even talk about profitability. *General Motors needs this car.*'"

I couldn't see Andrew Farah just then, but for a moment I almost envied him. ▀

Jonathan Rauch is an Atlantic correspondent.

Intrigued (and alarmed) by the new science of “neuromarketing,” our correspondent peers into his own brain via an MRI machine and learns what he really thinks about Jimmy Carter, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Bruce Springsteen, and Edie Falco.

BY JEFFREY GOLDBERG

My Amygdala, My Self

Last year, at my family’s Passover seder, I heard myself issuing a series of ideologically contradictory, Manischewitz-fueled political pronouncements. If I remember correctly, I called for the immediate invasion of Yemen (or possibly Oman); the outlawing of Wal-Mart; and the mandatory arming of college professors. I believe I may also have endorsed Russ Feingold for president. ¶ My friend Bill Knapp, who is a Democratic political consultant and, as such, a man whose devotion to a coherent set of liberal-centrist policy ideas does not waver, at least in public, suggested that I have my head examined, in order to determine »

whether I was neurologically wired for liberalism or conservatism. My wife asked, with a disconcerting level of enthusiasm, whether this was actually possible.

"Not only is it possible, but I have the perfect person to do it," Bill said (I'm permitted to quote him because the Goldberg seder is on the record). He told us that a neuroscientist named Marco Iacoboni, who directs UCLA's Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation Laboratory (it sounds even better in the original German), could scan my brain while showing me images of famous politicians. My brain's response to these pictures, as recorded by a functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) machine, would uncover my actual inclinations and predispositions by sidestepping the usual inhibition controls that can make focus-group testing unreliable.

I was hesitant, for two reasons. First, I believed that I already possessed a superior grasp of my brain's division of labor: 30 percent of my brain is obsessed with the Holocaust; an additional 30 percent worries about my children; 10 percent is reserved for status anxiety; 7 percent, *The Sopranos*; 4 percent, Kurds; 2 percent, Chinese food; and so on. I reserve approximately 6 percent, on good days, for *The Atlantic*.

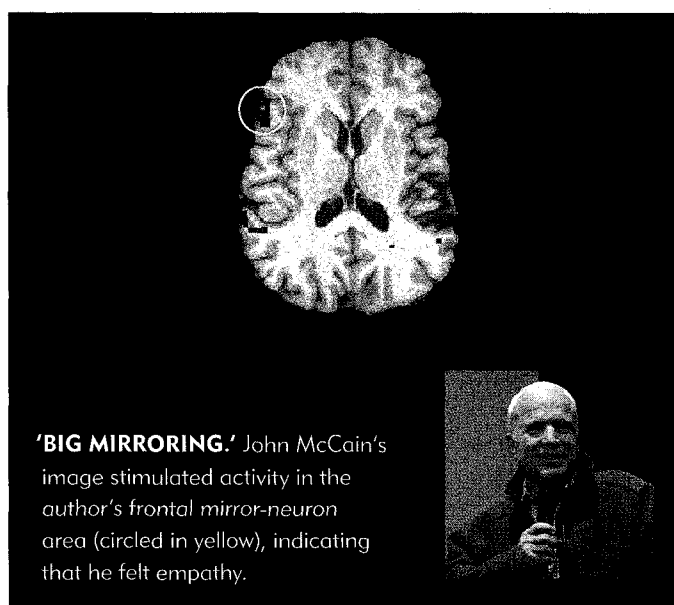
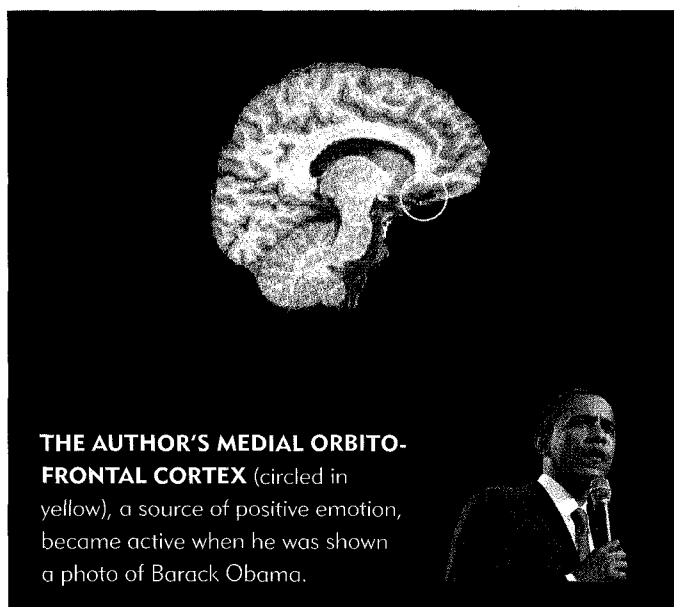
In addition, I think about sex, and the New York Yankees.

My hesitation also grew from inexperience: I'd never been subjected to a brain scan. What if the MRI discovered that I have a deep empathy for Pat Buchanan? What if it discovered a malignant tumor? What if it discovered a malignant tumor in the shape of Pat Buchanan?

But the science seemed almost irresistibly interesting. Also, of sufficient danger to humanity to warrant at least the formation of a strong opinion on my part.

Bill and his partners in FKF Applied Research—the two F's are Tom Freedman, a former Clinton administration official, and his brother Joshua, a psychiatrist and UCLA neuroscientist—are pioneers in the field of neuro-marketing. They argue that fMRI technology provides fail-safe insights into consumer behavior. Unlike traditional methods of measuring the effectiveness of advertisements, fMRI defeats the curse of standard market-testing: the bias in self-reporting. In other words, if the ventral striatum lights up when I drink Pepsi, this means—according to FKF, at any rate—that I find Pepsi greatly pleasurable, even if I report no particular experience of pleasure in a taste test. For those of us who would prefer to deny Pepsi and Taco Bell and Nike access to our skulls—and who, God knows, don't want Karl Rove and Mark Penn spelunking down our brain stems—advances in neuro-marketing provoke a good measure of apprehension.

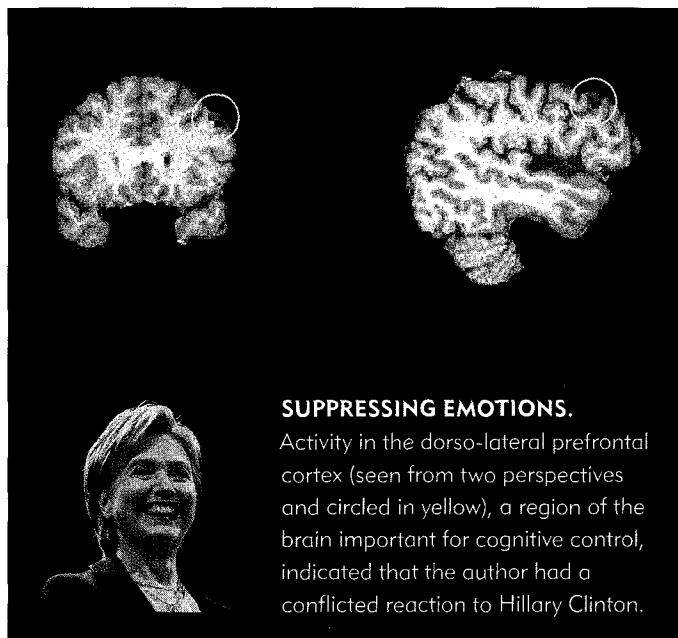
Bill Knapp tried to allay my fears. "You have too much amygdala about people looking at your amygdala," he said, referring to a part of the brain that experiences fear and loathing. In his view, knowledge gained from fMRI



technology will benefit not only marketers but consumers. "Insights into the human mind are empowering for you. Both sides in the marketing equation are getting more information. You can use this to figure out why someone won't buy a Jaguar, and also why some people don't take global warming seriously."

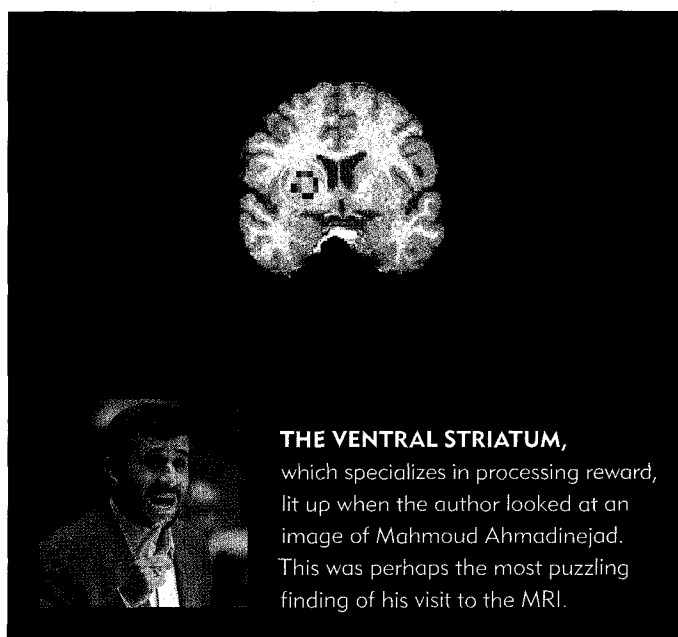
Still, I wondered to what degree this was truly scientific and to what degree it was 21st-century phrenology. The columnist David Brooks, who is writing a book about the brain, encouraged my skepticism when I talked to him about this. "My fear is that this is like flying over Los Angeles at night, looking at the lights in the houses and trying to guess what people are talking about at dinner," he said.

I mentioned Brooks's doubts to the neuroscientist Iacoboni, who dismissed them, but with a caveat. "This is



SUPPRESSING EMOTIONS.

Activity in the dorso-lateral prefrontal cortex (seen from two perspectives and circled in yellow), a region of the brain important for cognitive control, indicated that the author had a conflicted reaction to Hillary Clinton.



THE VENTRAL STRIATUM,

which specializes in processing reward, lit up when the author looked at an image of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. This was perhaps the most puzzling finding of his visit to the MRI.

not one-to-one mapping," he said. "You have to interpret the data within the context of the brain activation. It's not mathematical, but it can give you an amazing understanding of what lights up different parts of the brain." Iacoboni, a world leader in the study of mirror neurons—cells in the brain that help us process the emotions and actions of other people (his new book, *Mirroring People*, has much to say about the connection between autism and "broken" mirror neurons)—told me that in order for his team to sift my brain comprehensively, I would have to spend a full week undergoing fMRI screening. But even an hour inside the machine would yield a baseline understanding of my neurological predispositions.

And so one day a few weeks ago, I found myself being slid inside an MRI at UCLA, with headphones over my ears and video goggles over my eyes. I quickly realized that Joshua Freedman and his team had chosen stimuli that matched my preoccupations. One of the first video images they showed me was Jimmy Carter speaking in defense of his decision to meet with Hamas leaders. Then there was President Bush talking about oil, and Hillary Clinton talking about health care, which caused me to realize that if you haven't lain supine in a claustrophobia-inducing magnetized tunnel while watching Hillary Clinton talk about health care one inch from your eyeballs, well, you just haven't lived. The Clinton video was followed by scenes from *The Wire* and *The Sopranos*. Kind of like a palate cleanser.

Then came a series of photographs: John McCain, Edie Falco, Golda Meir, Barack Obama, and David Ben-Gurion. One sequence consisted of Osama bin Laden, Daniel Pearl, my 7-year-old son, and my wife. Then another sequence: Obama, Hillary, Yasir Arafat, Bruce Springsteen, a poster for *Fiddler on the Roof*, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, George W. Bush, Bob Dylan, me, David Bradley (the man who owns this magazine), and Ronald Reagan.

I spent an hour inside the MRI and emerged irritated, with a clanging headache. "You have a good-looking brain!" Iacoboni said, smiling.

For some reason, the news that my brain did not contain any tumors, Pat Buchanan-shaped or otherwise, failed to improve my mood. I was worried, of course, about my reactions to several of the stimuli. I asked Freedman what would happen if the photograph of David Bradley activated my insula, the region of the brain associated with revulsion. "We'll reinterpret the findings," he said.

OK, but what if the sight of Golda Meir provoked feelings of sexual arousal? What if the sight of David Ben-Gurion provoked feelings of sexual arousal? What if it turned out that I actually feel disgust at the sight of Bruce Springsteen? To think of all the money I've wasted on concert tickets and T-shirts. Most worrisome, of course, was the matter of my wife. Inappropriate activations could have lasting consequences.

The preliminary findings began to arrive a few days later, in a series of e-mails from Iacoboni. "Carter: big amygdala response on both sides! Jeff, do you fear this guy?" *Fear* might not be the most accurate term, but I worry about him a great deal. I'd recently given his book on Israel a negative review in *The Washington Post*. Score one for the fMRI.

The *Sopranos* video sequence, he said, activated a "nice response in the fusiform face area, a visual area processing faces, but an especially big ventral striatum response, which is a brain area that gets active for rewarding stimuli. We now know you really like *The Sopranos*." I didn't need a million-dollar machine to tell me that.

But it turns out that my ventral striatum likes *The Wire* even more. Iacoboni and Freedman saw intense movement in my extrastriate visual areas and among my mirror neurons. When we spoke later, Iacoboni explained that the mirror-neuron activity suggests that I “identify with the characters to such a degree” that I’m “almost pretending to do the things they’re doing on the screen, being a homicide detective. When people watch a movie they love, they’re truly living the things taking place on the screen through their mirror neurons.”

Then it was on to the question about my political leanings. Film of Obama, Iacoboni said, showed some mirroring, which suggests empathy, and a small amount of activity in the medial orbito-frontal cortex, which is a source of positive emotion. My brain likes Obama, apparently.

My reaction to Bush could not be measured, because I fidgeted each time he appeared on screen. “You can’t lie still when you see Bush,” Iacoboni said. I stayed still for McCain, who stimulated “big mirroring,” indicating empathy, and some amount of ventral-striatum activity, an overall positive response. Images of Hillary stimulated activity in the dorso-lateral prefrontal cortex, which is a region of the brain involved in cognitive control. “You may be trying to suppress unwanted emotions,” he said. What those emotions are, he couldn’t say. “There’s a lot of conflict in your mind about Hillary.”

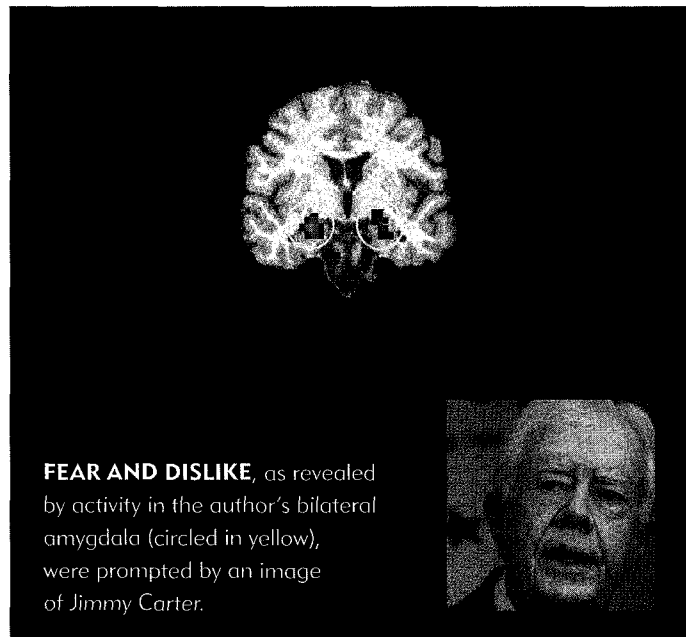
Iacoboni told me he needed to do further testing, but that it was safe to say that I feel no particular loyalty to either political party.

Bin Laden, I was pleased to learn, stimulated predictably negative brain activity, but the neuroscientists were flummoxed by my reaction to the sight of Ahmadinejad, who apparently stimulated, in a most dramatic way, my ventral striatum. “Reward!” Iacoboni said. “You’ll have to explain this one.”

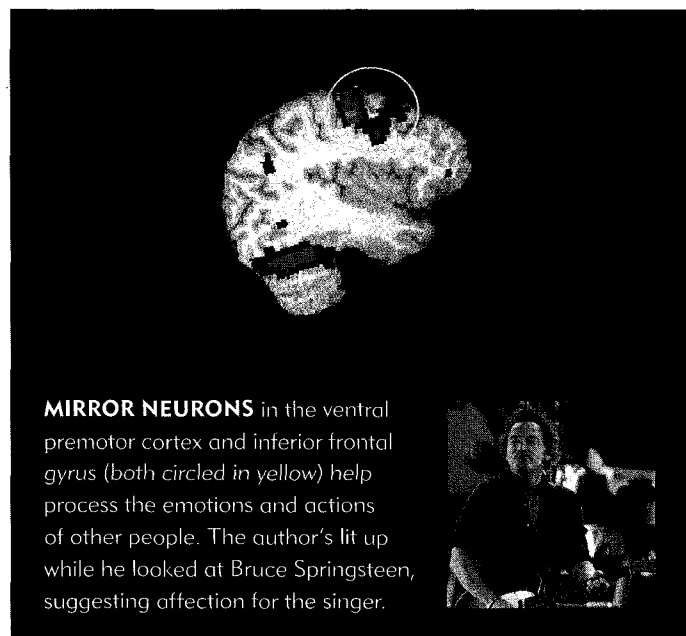
When I couldn’t, Joshua Freedman, who is a practicing psychiatrist, offered a possible explanation: “Perhaps you believe that the Israelis or the Americans have the situation under control and so you’re anticipating the day that he’s brought down.” He asked me some questions about my view of Jewish history, and then said: “You seem to believe that the Jewish people endure, that people who try to hurt the Jewish people ultimately fail. Therefore, you derive pleasure from believing that Ahmadinejad will also eventually fail. It’s very similar to the experiment with the monkey and the grape. It’s been shown that the monkey feels maximal reward not when he eats the grape but at the moment he’s sure it’s in his possession, ready to eat. That could explain your response to Ahmadinejad.”

He paused. “Or it means that you’re a Shiite.”

Iacoboni and Freedman were more definitive on another, less consequential, question. “You’re definitely



FEAR AND DISLIKE, as revealed by activity in the author’s bilateral amygdala (circled in yellow), were prompted by an image of Jimmy Carter.



MIRROR NEURONS in the ventral premotor cortex and inferior frontal gyrus (both circled in yellow) help process the emotions and actions of other people. The author’s lit up while he looked at Bruce Springsteen, suggesting affection for the singer.

a Springsteen person,” Iacoboni said. “Your brain is silent on Dylan.” When shown a photograph of Springsteen, I displayed a “big mirroring response in the ventral premotor cortex and inferior frontal gyrus, where mirror neurons are located.” He went on, “You like the Boss a lot, you identify with him, empathize with him, and you are almost pretending internally to sing and play like him.”

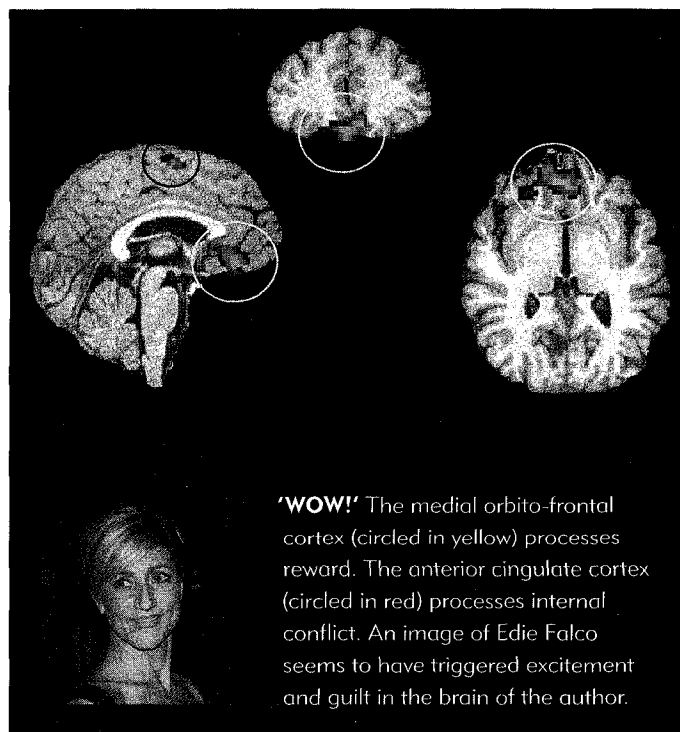
And my reaction to David Bradley, the man who signs my paychecks? “You activated a fronto-parietal network in the right cerebral hemisphere that has been implicated in self-recognition in many experiments,” Iacoboni said.

Does this mean that I think I’m David Bradley? I asked. There are aspects of David Bradley’s lifestyle I’d like

to adopt as my own, of course, but there are also aspects of Jay-Z's lifestyle I'd like to adopt as my own, and I'm under no illusion that I'm Jay-Z.

Freedman said that my reaction to Bradley's face was similar to what it would be if I'd been looking in a mirror: "You're seeing approval of yourself when the image appears." In other words, I'm a narcissist. "From a boss's perspective, I would be worried if there had been dorso-lateral prefrontal-cortex activity, because that means you would be trying to inhibit your automatic responses."

Which is what happened when I saw a picture of my wife. This had me concerned, but Iacoboni explained: "The dorso-lateral prefrontal-cortex activity means you're trying to exercise cognitive control, that you're trying to



protect the privacy of your relationship with your wife. I interpret this positively because there's also medial orbito-frontal cortex activity, which is a region associated with positive emotion." Iacoboni could not explain one other response to my wife's photograph: "You have weird auditory-cortex activity, almost like you're hearing her voice, even though we just showed you her picture without sound." When I told my wife about this, she asked me how it could be that I hear her when she's not speaking, but don't hear her when she is speaking. I said that this was a question well beyond the capacity of neuroscience to answer.

Iacoboni told me that there was one other troubling finding, the one concerning Edie Falco. "Your medial orbito-frontal cortex, anterior cingulate cortex, and ventral striatum are all activated. Wow! What will your wife say?"

Apparently my brain—or the part of it I now refer to as my prefrontal Spitzer lobe—finds the sight of Edie Falco somewhat exciting. "Both the medial orbito-frontal cortex and the ventral striatum process reward—sex is, with food, the primary reward—and the anterior cingulate cortex often activates for internal conflict." He went on, "People watching erotic pictures—and you watching Falco—are aroused but kind of feel guilty for being aroused, or simply feel guilty by being aroused in a brain scanner, with other people looking at their brain responses."

Could it just mean that I think Edie Falco is a great actress?

"Yes, sure," he said, tentatively. "You could say that."

"The good news for your marriage," Freedman said, "is that you had a much stronger, more positive overall response to your wife than to Edie Falco. This is just a primitive response. Edie Falco is not who you are."

But I'd certainly pay money to see her in a movie. The commercial implications of this nascent science became quite obvious to me at a certain point in my debriefing. FKF already has a list of corporate clients, Bill Knapp told me. He would not name the companies, but he said they are all interested in measuring the "strength of their brand iconography, where it lives in the brain, what is attracting people to the brand, and what is pushing them away." So far, 155 volunteers have been tested at UCLA as part of FKF's work. Knapp said that although both he and Tom Freedman come from the political world, they are not selling their services to campaigns. "The political world would not find this acceptable yet. Ten years from now, it will be as widely used as focus groups and polling."

I tend to think, after my own experience, that there's a great future for vanity scanning as well—particularly in West L.A. Who wouldn't want to learn how best to light up their own ventral striatum?

Of course, I've been left with a series of bothersome questions (not to mention a wife who will no longer watch *Sopranos* reruns with me). I'm not so much troubled by the question of why Ahmadinejad provoked a positive response in me—I know what I know, despite what my brain says. But what do I do with my Dylan albums? Who should I vote for? And if Edie Falco blurbs Jimmy Carter's next book, will I have a stroke? What would my brain do if, more plausibly, I were to run into her someday at a movie screening? I posed this last question to Joshua Freedman.

"Your amygdala would light up," as the fight-or-flight reaction was triggered. "But then your dorso-lateral prefrontal cortex would probably come in and say, 'I don't want her, I like what I have.'" ■

Jeffrey Goldberg, an *Atlantic* national correspondent and the author of *Prisoners: A Story of Friendship and Terror* (2007), blogs at jeffreysgoldberg.theatlantic.com.

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Why stop signs and speed limits endanger Americans

BY JOHN STADDON

Distracting Miss Daisy

There is a stretch of North Glebe Road, in Arlington, Virginia, that epitomizes the American approach to road safety. It's a sloping curve, beginning on a four-lane divided highway and running down to Chain Bridge, on the Potomac River. Most drivers, absent a speed limit, would probably take the curve at 30 or 35 mph in good weather. But it has a 25-mph speed limit, vigorously enforced. As you approach the curve, a sign with flashing lights suggests slowing further, to 15 mph. A little later, another sign makes the same suggestion. ¶ *Great!* the neighborhood's more cautious residents might think. »

We're being protected. But I believe policies like this in fact make us all less safe.

I grew up in Great Britain, and over the past five years I've split my time between England and the United States. I've long found driving in the U.S. to be both annoying and boring. Annoying because of lots of unnecessary waits at stop signs and stoplights, and because of the need to obsess over speed when not waiting. Boring, scenery apart, because to avoid speeding tickets, I feel compelled to set the cruise control on long trips, driving at the same mind-numbing rate, regardless of road conditions.

Relatively recently—these things take a remarkably long time to sink in—I began to notice something else. Often when I return to the U.S. (usually to a suburban area in North Carolina's Research Triangle), I see a fender bender or two within a few days. Yet I almost never see accidents in the U.K.

This surprised me, since the roads I drive here are generally wider, better marked, and less crowded than in the parts of England that I know best. And so I came to reflect on the mundane details of traffic-control policies in Great Britain and the United States. And I began to think that the American system of traffic control, with its many signs and stops, and with its specific rules tailored to every bend in the road, has had the unintended consequence of causing more accidents than it prevents. Paradoxically, almost every new sign put up in the U.S. probably makes drivers a little safer on the stretch of road it guards. But collectively, the forests of signs along American roadways, and the multitude of rules to look out for, are quite deadly.

Economists and ecologists sometimes speak of the "tragedy of the commons"—the way rational individual actions can collectively reduce the common good when resources are limited. How this applies to traffic safety may not be obvious. It's easy to understand that although it pays the selfish herdsman to add one more sheep to common grazing land,

the result may be overgrazing, and less for everyone. But what is the limited resource, the commons, in the case of driving? It's attention. Attending to a sign competes with attending to the road. The more you look for signs, for police, and at your speedometer, the less attentive you will be to traffic conditions. The limits on attention are much more severe than most people imagine. And it takes only a momentary lapse, at the wrong time, to cause a serious accident.

SMEED'S LAW, OR WHY SAFETY MEASURES DON'T IMPROVE SAFETY

What matters most for road safety? The quality of the roads themselves? The engineering of the cars that travel them? The speed limit? The answer may be "none of the above." In 1949, a British statistician named

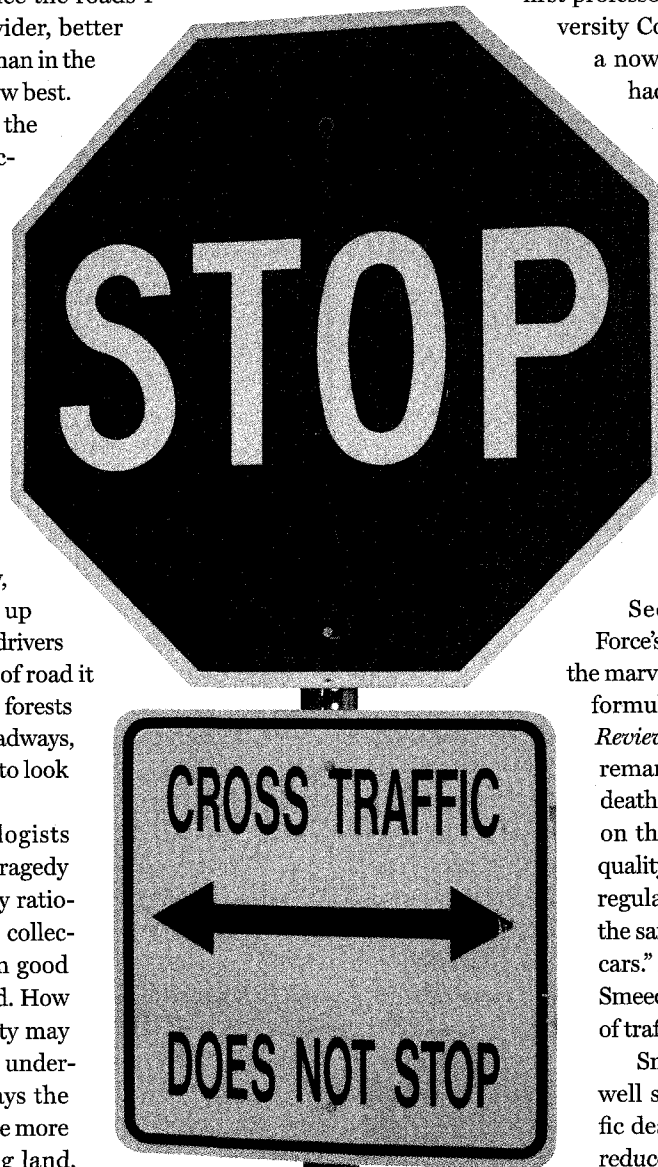
R. J. Smeed, who would go on to become the first professor of traffic studies at University College London, proposed a now-eponymous law. Smeed had looked at data on traffic fatalities in many different

countries, over many years. He found that deaths per year could be predicted fairly accurately by a formula that involved just two factors: the number of people and the number of cars. The physicist Freeman Dyson, who during World War II had worked for Smeed in

the Operational Research

Section of the Royal Air Force's Bomber Command, noted the marvelous simplicity of Smeed's formula, writing in *Technology Review* in November 2006: "It is remarkable that the number of deaths does not depend strongly on the size of the country, the quality of the roads, the rules and regulations governing traffic, or the safety equipment installed in cars." As a result of his research, Smeed developed a fatalistic view of traffic safety, Dyson wrote.

Smeed's Law has worked less well since the mid-1960s; traffic deaths have been somewhat reduced by engineering features



such as seat belts and air bags. But technical improvements generally matter less than you might expect, because they affect driver behavior. It's called "risk compensation": as cars become safer, drivers tend to take more risks. Psychological factors, in other words, appear to play a huge role in road safety, and they often undercut well-intentioned safety initiatives.

I've spent my professional life studying adaptive behavior—how changes in the environment lead to changes in the ways humans and animals act. I'd contend that as traffic signs have proliferated in the U.S., drivers have adapted in profoundly unhealthy ways. We may imagine that driver training is something that happens to 16-year-olds in small cars labeled STUDENT DRIVER. But of course we spend a lifetime on the roads after we get our licenses, and we're being trained by our experiences every day. Let's think about what drivers are actually learning on the roads in America.

DRIVER MISEDUCATION

Consider the stop sign. It seems innocuous enough; we do need to stop from time to time. But think about how the signs are actually set up and used. For one thing, there's the placement of the signs—off to the side of the road, often amid trees, parked cars, and other road signs; rarely right in front of the driver, where he or she should be looking.

Then there's the sheer number of them. They sit at almost every intersection in most American neighborhoods. In some, every intersection seems to have a *four-way* stop. Stop signs are costly to drivers and bad for the environment: stop/start driving uses more gas, and vehicles pollute most when starting up from rest. More to the point, however, the overabundance of stop signs teaches drivers to be less observant of cross traffic and to exercise less judgment when driving—instead, they look for signs and drive according to what the signs tell them to do.

The four-way stop deserves special recognition as a masterpiece of counterproductive public-safety efforts. Where should the driver look? What must he remember? State driving manuals can be surprisingly coy about exactly what drivers should do at four-way stops. The North Carolina *Driver's Handbook*, for example, doesn't mention four-ways as a separate category at all. Yahoo Answers imparts the following wisdom: "The rules for a four-way stop are like those for a two-way: Stop and look for oncoming traffic, and proceed when it is safe to do so." So far so good, but then: "You may occasionally arrive at a four-way stop sign at the same time as another driver. In such cases the driver to the right has the right of way. However, not all drivers know this. If someone to your left decides to go first, let them!" Thanks! But remind me: aside from bewildering the driver, what's the point of stopping traffic in all four directions?

The four-way stop weakens the force of *all* stop signs by muddling the main question drivers need to answer, namely: Which road has priority? And indeed, American drivers have apparently become confused enough by this question that some communities are now beginning to affix *another* sign to the poles of stop signs that aren't four-way, warning CROSS TRAFFIC DOES NOT STOP.

Speed limits in the U.S. are perhaps a more severe safety hazard than stop signs. In many places, they change too frequently—sometimes every few hundred yards—once again training drivers to look for signs, not at the road. What's more, many speed limits in the U.S. are set in arbitrary and irrational ways. An eight-lane interstate can have a limit of 50 to 70 mph or more. What makes the difference? A necessarily imperfect guess at probable traffic conditions. The road may sometimes be busy—so the limit is set low. But sometimes the road is not busy, and the safe speed is then much higher than the limit.

A particularly vexing aspect of the U.S. policy is that speed limits seem to be enforced more when speeding is *safe*. As a colleague once pointed out, "An empty highway on a sunny day? You're dead meat!" A more systematic effort to train drivers to ignore road conditions can hardly be imagined. By training drivers to drive according to the signs rather than their judgment in great conditions, the American system also subtly encourages them to rely on the signs rather than judgment in poor conditions, when merely following the signs would be dangerous.

Which brings me back to North Glebe Road in Arlington. It turns out that the speed signs do perform an important safety function: in wet weather, many drivers had taken the curve too fast; traffic authorities have substantially reduced accidents on the curve by adding the 15-mph warning sign, and they would be foolish to remove it, absent larger changes in American traffic policy. But this is emblematic of the sort of signage arms race that has become necessary in the U.S. When you've trained people to drive according to the signs, you need to keep adding more signs to tell them exactly when and in what fashion they need to adjust their behavior. Otherwise, drivers may see no reason why they should slow down on a curve in the rain.

A TRAFFIC FREE-FOR-ALL?

So what am I suggesting—abolishing signs and rules? A traffic free-for-all? Actually, I wouldn't be the first to suggest that. A few European towns and neighborhoods—Drachten in Holland, fashionable Kensington High Street in London, Prince Charles's village of Poundbury, and a few others—have even gone ahead and tried it. They've taken the apparently drastic step of eliminating traffic control more or less completely in a few high-traffic and pedestrian-dense areas. The intention is to create environments in which everyone is more

focused, more cautious, and more considerate. Stop signs, stoplights, even sidewalks are mostly gone. The results, by all accounts, have been excellent: pedestrian accidents have been reduced by 40 percent or more in some places, and traffic flows no more slowly than before.

What I propose is more modest: the adoption of something like the British traffic system, which is free of many of the problems that plague American roads. One British alternative to the stop sign is just a dashed line on the pavement, right in front of the driver. It actually means “yield,” not “stop”; it tells the driver which road has the right of way. Another alternative is the roundabout. Roundabouts in the U.S. are typically large. But as drivers get used to them—as they have in the U.K. over the past three or four decades—they can be made smaller and smaller. A “mini-roundabout” in the U.K. is essentially just a large white dot in the middle of the intersection. In this form, it amounts to no more than an instruction to give way to traffic coming from the right (that would be the left over here, of course, since the Brits drive on the left).

As these examples indicate, traffic signs in the U.K. are often on the road itself, where the driver should be looking. And most right-of-way signs are informational: there are almost no mandatory stops in the U.K. (The dominant motive in the U.S. traffic-control community seems to be distrust, and policies are usually designed to control drivers and reduce their discretion. The British system puts more responsibility on the drivers themselves.)

Speed limits in the U.K. are also simpler and better. They are set by road type, so drivers know what limits to expect on highways, rural roads, and urban roads—usually without any signs to tell them. These limits are relatively high, set assuming optimum driving conditions, in contrast to the U.S. limits, which seem to be set with something in between the best and worst conditions in mind. (Precisely where on this spectrum U.S. limits fall seems to vary from road to road, engendering mistrust of the signs in some drivers.) Nonstandard speed limits in the U.K. are rare, so you tend to take them quite seriously when they appear, and they are posted frequently—so you don’t risk missing them if you’re, say, watching the road ahead of you.

I’ve given several talks on traffic in the U.S. and have always found members of the audience to be highly skeptical that the U.K. traffic system could possibly be safer than the one on this side of the Atlantic. As noted, there seem to be more fender benders over here. But not all minor accidents get reported to the police, in either country, and definitions vary. So let’s look at fatalities: everyone agrees on what death is, and fatalities are always reported.

Detailed statistics show that as of 2003, fatalities per mile traveled were 36 percent greater in the U.S. than they were in the U.K. Traffic deaths per million people show an even greater disparity through 2006, the most recent

year for which full statistics are available. If the U.S. death rate were the same as the U.K.’s, roughly 6,000 fewer Americans would die each year—that’s half again as many Americans as have died in Iraq in the past five years.

As experimentalists like to remind us, correlation isn’t causation, and differences in traffic-control policies might not be the only reason for this huge difference in traffic deaths. Perhaps people drive slower in Britain? Well, no; in my experience, they usually drive faster. Are cars themselves safer in Britain? Again, probably not; they tend to be smaller, with fewer safety features. It is true that SUVs are more prevalent in the U.S., and that SUVs are often lethal when they hit smaller cars; this likely accounts for some of the difference in fatality rates. But it’s also true, for instance, that when traditional intersections in the U.S. have been replaced by roundabouts, collisions have typically been reduced by about 40 percent, and fatalities by up to 90 percent. And as the U.K. has refined and simplified its traffic-control system over the past 30 years, total traffic fatalities have fallen by about 50 percent. Over the same period, fatalities in the U.S. have declined by just 20 percent; in the past several years, they haven’t declined at all.

I DIDN’T SEE THE GORILLA IN FRONT OF ME

Conjurers and magicians have long known how to distract people so they miss a move that should be obvious. But it is only recently that social psychologists have come up with dramatic demonstrations of just how tight the limits on our attention can be. One of the most compelling is a 75-second video, by the psychologists Daniel Simons and Christopher Chabris, that shows six male and female students, in black or white T-shirts, passing basketballs to one another. The observer is asked to count the number of passes.

About 45 seconds in, a person in a gorilla suit walks onscreen. She strolls between passers to the center of the screen, faces the camera, beats her chest, and then exits. You can’t possibly miss her—unless, that is, you’ve been instructed to pay attention to the basketballs. When each observer in the experiment was asked, “Did you notice anything unusual in the video?” about half said no. That’s *inattention blindness*, the effect of competition for the observer’s attention: by looking for one thing, we miss another that should have been obvious.

The miseducation that U.S. drivers are receiving is not as explicit as the instructions to these students, but it extends over years and is in some ways more forceful: the legal penalties for failing to notice traffic signs are severe. I believe that U.S. traffic policies are inducing a form of inattention blindness in American drivers. When so many drivers say, after an accident, “I didn’t see him,” they’re not all lying. ▀

John Staddon is the James B. Duke professor of psychology and brain sciences at Duke University and an honorary visiting professor at the University of York, U.K.

Rupert Murdoch wants his *Wall Street Journal* to displace *The New York Times* as the world's paper of record. His ambitions could be good news for the newspaper industry—or another nail in the coffin of serious journalism.

BY MARK BOWDEN

Mr. Murdoch Goes to War

Rupert Murdoch entered the ninth-floor newsroom in Lower Manhattan with a bouncy, rolling gait that seemed much too sprightly, given the seismic waves of dread it spread in all directions. It was late in the afternoon of December 13, 2007, a date that will live in infamy for a certain generation of American newsmen. Lawyers were still putting the final touches on the \$5 billion deal that would make Dow Jones & Company and its crown jewel, *The Wall Street Journal*, the newest subsidiaries of Murdoch's improbably vast News Corporation. The global-media buccaneer, the rapacious philistine from Down Under, had come to personally stake his claim to "the daily diary of the American dream." »

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No one could find a podium, so four green-and-white boxes of printer paper were pushed together as a platform, and Murdoch stepped up with a microphone in hand to address his mostly appalled new employees. With his thin hair dyed rusty brown and brushed straight back off the wide dome of his forehead, and modish wire-framed glasses over small, heavy-lidded eyes, his face was all too familiar, its deeply creased cheeks sagging in a fine cascade of syncline folds to the crisp knot of his blue silk tie.

Newspapers are in a sad way in America. Readership continues to fall. Advertisers are deserting them for newer forms of media. Revenues are plummeting, as the costs of printing and distribution mount catastrophically. Faced with declining profit margins, investors are fleeing. Knight Ridder, once the largest newspaper chain in America, has gone out of business. Stalwart family owners such as Dow Jones's Bancrofts are selling out. Reporters and editors are being bought out or laid off in droves,



DAY OF INFAMY: Rupert Murdoch delivers his first address to the *Wall Street Journal* newsroom.

"Naturally, this is a day of great excitement for us. Maybe it's more a day of nervousness for a lot of you," he said, a slight Aussie flavor turning the last word to *yew-ah*. No doubt Murdoch felt the tremors of dread. No doubt he appreciated them; they were a form of homage.

But *nervousness* was way too cute. The mood was grim. A great frigate of high-minded journalism had just struck its colors to the Tabloid Pirate. The once-mighty, staid, studiously gray, independent *Wall Street Journal* was now a first cousin to Fox ("Fair and Balanced") News, Bart Simpson, the London daily *Sun*'s Page Three titty displays, and the deliberately outrageous *New York Post*. (Within months, the two U.S. newspapers would be hawked together on the streets of New York as a \$1 package deal.)

"But I hope it's also a day of excitement, because it is a new day in the history of this company," Murdoch said, stressing the words *new day*. "We've come here to expand it, to develop it, and, where possible, to improve all of its products."

and not just at small regional papers. The once-fat *Los Angeles Times* has been dismantling itself. *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* are trimming their staffs. In the eyes of many media experts, print journalism, that stubborn 15th-century technology, appears at long last to be on its deathbed.

Except that Murdoch is investing in it. *We've come here to expand*, he said. He has announced his intention for the remade *Journal* not just to supplant *The New York Times* as the nation's preeminent daily newspaper but to become the first truly global daily. This would be music to the ears of any newsroom, so hope mingled with the professional dread in Murdoch's audience that afternoon. He may be awful, but he is *rich* and awful, *smart* and awful, *powerful* and awful, and while he may well be crazy to still believe in the future of print, he is *determined* and crazy. Murdoch might be the last person *The Journal* would have chosen as its savior, but newspapers may well be down to last hopes.

What does he see that others do not? What is his vision for one of America's most venerated dailies? Can he really grow *The Journal* in such a hostile economic climate? And if he succeeds, might *The Wall Street Journal* as we know it, and as millions of readers have loved it, cease to exist?

Murdoch has little patience for ceremony, and his words that takeover day in December were brief and to the point—pledges to make a “great papah” a “bettah papah,” assurances that “we do know and understand the tremendous values of Dow Jones and particularly of *The Wall Street Journal*, and the very high bar-ah that you’ve set yourselves,” and optimistic talk about how the global economy, and the tremendous “desiah for information” that comes with it, offers *The Journal* the chance to become “the preeminent source of financial information and comment in the world.”

After some polite applause, Murdoch introduced Robert Thomson, a lanky, stooped, Ichabod Crane-like figure in a black suit and skinny black tie, who, as Murdoch put it, “will be the publisher, with the editors all reporting to him.” Murdoch explained that Thomson, a veteran of the rival *Financial Times* who had been editing *The Times* of London for him for almost six years, would have no “business responsibilities” as publisher, which meant that he was the paper’s de facto new editor.

Thus crumbled, with Murdoch’s first words as the new owner, the hopeful wall that had been erected with fanfare while the sale was going through to shield the paper’s editorial content from the flamboyant magnate’s meddling.

The paper’s former top editor, Marcus Brauchli, was just a few paces away, his arms folded across his chest—a slight, amiable, balding man who had emerged victorious from a tumultuous management struggle the previous year, only to find himself presiding over someone else’s newspaper. His rise from the ranks of reporter had been so rapid that his nickname was “The Rocket.” Feelings about Brauchli (pronounced *Brock-li*) contained the usual mix of admiration and envy that adheres to anyone who achieves remarkable success in a large organization, but overnight all jealousy had been replaced with hope. The weight of *The Journal*’s proud traditions were draped across his slender shoulders. He was the newsroom’s champion, whose proven shrewdness and ambition would now be deployed in their defense. And he seemed ideally suited to the task, given that he had been good friends with Thomson for years. If anyone could skillfully navigate the treacherous waters ahead, it was Brauchli.

He would resign in four months.

Rupert Murdoch is, by most accounts, a delightful man. Born to wealth that he has manifestly multiplied, he is a man who lives a globe-trotting lifestyle, a man who need never carry his own bags or stand in line at a security checkpoint at an airport, a man who

moves through a string of fabulous residences; it would be easy to assume that he is a coddled, petulant creature of privilege. Yet Murdoch often flies commercial, carries his own bags, prefers a regular hotel room to a suite, uses taxis, and shops everywhere for bargains. Bruce Dover, in his book, *China Adventures*, tells the story of how Murdoch, on the night of the formal handover of power in Hong Kong to the Chinese government, found himself by a series of accidents alone on foot in Kowloon, lost, trying to find his way back to his hotel with neither money nor cell phone. He wandered for hours, melting in stifling humidity, unable to make himself understood, and when he did finally find his hotel, he was barred from entering by guards who were unimpressed with his protestations in English and his lack of an invitation or an ID. Dover, one of his executives, was at long last summoned to the outer gate to investigate the stubborn imprecations of a damp, walletless old man. Dover found Murdoch actually cheerful, or at least “in surprisingly good humor.”

“What an adventure!” the tycoon said.

Like the great Whitman, Murdoch is large, dizzyingly so, with enterprises that span the globe and broaden the frontiers of information and entertainment technology, and like Whitman, he contains striking contradictions. He is a bare-knuckled, union-crushing capitalist who has had more success than anyone wooing the ruling Communists in China. He is a Thatcherite conservative whose New York tabloid has endorsed Barack Obama. He is a 77-year-old who lives the life of a young man, with a Chinese-born wife (his third) who is almost four decades his junior and two small daughters to complement his four middle-aged children. He is a global-media baron, a titan in his field, whose empire now includes 20th Century Fox, Fox TV, Fox News, Fox Business Network, HarperCollins, *The Times* and *Sunday Times* of London, *The Sun*, the *New York Post*, *The Weekly Standard*, Dow Jones, BSkyB television, National Geographic Channel, MySpace, etc., etc. But Murdoch still sees himself as a stubborn outsider, a freethinking cultural marauder come to rattle the halls of power—a kind of Aussie Bart Simpson writ large. And nothing gets his juices flowing faster than a chance to disturb *any* establishment, be it Britain’s labor unions (he broke their stranglehold on London newspapers), the BBC (which he has successfully challenged with BSkyB), the dominant American TV networks (which he has taken on with his Fox channels), or CNN (which his Fox News Channel surpassed as the leading all-news cable channel, after CNN’s Ted Turner famously promised to squish Murdoch “like a bug”).

Murdoch is given credit for great business acumen, but he is less a pioneer and visionary than a wealthy and aggressive collector. He has vast resources and is constantly adding and subtracting companies to and from his empire. He identifies potential markets, and then, like

a rich art buyer writing big checks for the work of artists who have already achieved critical recognition, he buys into companies that have demonstrated promise in reaching those markets. He doesn't have a record of consistent success; some of his biggest newspapers lose money, including the *New York Post* and *The Times* of London. What he has are the resources to absorb failure.

When it comes to running a newspaper, this combination of traits—buccaneering and collecting—makes Murdoch a throwback to the great journalism pirates, William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer, who reigned during the days when most major cities had multiple dailies duking it out on street corners for readers. Back then, the name of the game was street sales, and the way to outsell the other rags was to have something hot that they did not. Reporters vied to *get out in front* of a story, to be one step ahead of everyone else. The more sensational the scoop, the more copies you sold. Reporters weren't so much writers as hustlers and con men. The very idea of serious social reform—or, perish the thought, literature!—was laughable. Reporting was about scooping the competition. Stories were to be written clearly and concisely. Sentences were

doing so with both feet planted firmly in the past. His strategy for success in 2008 is to behave as though the year is 1908. So while his competitors retrench, Murdoch is going to war—by challenging *The New York Times*, in particular, to an old-fashioned newspaper battle. Except this time the stakes aren't nickels in Times Square, but dominance in America, and the world.

It's a war he could well lose. For print journalists, the good news about Murdoch is that he believes the old Gutenberg technology still has legs, and that he is willing to back that belief with capital. But any 21st-century newspaper war is going to be fought in large part on the Web, and when it comes to new media, Murdoch's record is mixed at best. From the 1990s on, he has repeatedly and unsuccessfully attempted to establish a foothold on the Internet. There was Delphi, an early player in the online industry, which he abandoned a few years after purchasing it. There was PointCast, a venture featuring something called “push” technology that Murdoch flirted with before it sank as quickly as it surfaced. Today he has staked his claim with MySpace, and he is actively seeking to broaden that beachhead by shopping around for

Rupert Murdoch might be the last person *The Journal* would have chosen as its savior, but newspapers may be down to last hopes.

short and simple, language plain. Editors prized the breaking front-page story that could be told without “jumping”—without forcing the reader to turn to an inside page.

This is how Murdoch understands journalism—as *content*, a word he uses all the time, rather than as a form of literature or public service, and as a commodity whose value largely derives from its instant retail malleability. A short, crisp scoop that dramatically advances a major developing story—Obama's poll numbers down! Britney back in rehab! Steinbrenner to fire another manager!—can be neatly packaged for a dizzying variety of media: print, radio, TV, the Internet, or even cell-phone screens. It doesn't matter much to a fully integrated media conglomerate like News Corporation how its customers choose to access this content, as long as the transaction pays. Business and financial news is ideally suited to this kind of cross-seeding, since markets are now global and customers are tuned in all day, every day. One of the first strong messages *Journal* reporters and editors received from their new owners was that Murdoch wants scoops. He wants his reporters out in front of every competitor on the planet.

This means that, at a time when every big newspaper is tinkering with futuristic business models, Murdoch is

a proven performer he can buy. He has flirted both with keeping *The Journal's* content behind a firewall (where it remains at the moment) and with offering it for free, which indicates that he hasn't cracked the central problem of Internet publication: How do you make it pay?

It's also a war he could abandon if it doesn't seem to be going his way. As his Internet ventures suggest, Murdoch has a history of moving aggressively into new territory, only to retreat just as quickly. He has built his media empire not only by identifying proven properties and investing in them, but also by ruthlessly discarding those that fail to measure up to his expectations. He can be a fickle patron, because his enthusiasm for a project is grounded not in a deeply held belief or commitment, but in the bottom line. And some speculate that he may ultimately value Dow Jones and *The Wall Street Journal* less for their own sakes than for what their brand names bring to his other properties, particularly his just-launched Fox Business Network, although Dow Jones has a contract with CNBC that will not expire until 2012.

For his new employees in that ninth-floor newsroom, though, the real danger might be that he could *win* the war—because Murdoch's definition of success could mean

that to save *The Journal*, he has to kill the newspaper as they have known it.

The old days of freewheeling newspaper competition ended with the advent of telecommunications. It was a gradual process, but by the middle of the last century, television and radio were delivering breaking news instantly and universally, eliminating one of the most compelling reasons to buy a newspaper. The print product still had a huge audience, but not large enough for most cities to profitably support more than one or two newspapers. The larger cities—New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Washington, Miami, Atlanta—still supported two or three, but usually only one newspaper “of record” and two or three scrappy tabloids that still relied on street sales, or were targeted to specific regions, like *Newsday*, the Long Island newspaper, or to specific slices of the readership, like *The Wall Street Journal*. *The Journal* didn’t try to compete head-to-head with *The New York Times*. Instead, it effectively sold itself as a mandatory “second read” for a certain class of New Yorker, and eventually a certain class of reader all over the United States.

In those fat and happy days, the glory days of “serious” American journalism, the concepts of objectivity and editorial independence grew into a kind of public religion. The old yellow era of Hearst and Pulitzer, publishers who threw their weight around vigorously and would even instigate a shooting war if it boosted circulation, had given way to a time of more-genteel ownership, often the Ivy League-educated sons and daughters of the press barons. Even the name *Pulitzer* was expropriated; it became an annual award given to the best examples of serious journalism, and in most newsrooms became a far more coveted goal than increased circulation. There was a high wall, we were assured, between the business side of the newspaper and its editorial staff, and newsrooms were increasingly peopled by a new generation of white-collar journalists, gentlemen (and ladies) of the Fourth Estate, arbiters of style, taste, and decency, who took upon themselves the tasks of keeping government honest and educating the public. (In my 20-plus years as a newspaper reporter, I was always amused when skeptics suggested that I wrote just what the newspaper’s owner told me to write. If only they knew how mightily the newsroom looked down its nose at the business side of the operation.)

This vision of a newspaper, one that prevailed at the highest levels of the craft for decades, ensured that the paper was not just a propaganda mill, the house organ of some rich man or political party, but a community of street-smart shoe-leather scholars who worked as the eyes, ears, and conscience of their city. This was the world of the Pentagon Papers and Watergate, of David Halberstam’s and Neil Sheehan’s courageous reporting from

Vietnam, and of countless other public-spirited examples of a responsible, serious journalism.

Even literary ambition began to creep into the pages of the great newspapers. At the best ones, when the material justified it, reporters were encouraged to write creatively and at length. A certain kind of reporter—and I was one—competed against others not so much for scoops, but for recognition, prizes, and tenured positions at papers where the rarefied work of “serious” journalism was underwritten. Mine was *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, where my byline read not “staff reporter” or “staff correspondent” but “staff writer,” and which we *writers* called, in its heyday, “the greatest care-and-feeding system for journalism ever invented.”

In this elevated climate, *The Wall Street Journal* was held in unique regard. Its disdain for street sales was defining. In appearance, it was defiantly dull and predictable. Its uniform gray vertical columns suggested the pinstripes on a banker’s worsted suit. In its use of small line drawings instead of photographs, in its refusal to chase the same stories as everyone else, in its quirkiness and uncompromising complexity, *The Journal* broadcast its refusal to pander to readers. Every day the front page featured two “leders” and the incomparable “a-hed.” These were long, ambitious, exceedingly well-written stories. A leder took a business or trend story and dug deeply into personalities and issues, whether it was a probe of backdated stock options for business executives by James Bandler and three other *Journal* writers, or Geeta Anand’s moving narrative about the crisis at a biotech company that had been asked to provide an experimental drug for a dying child. The a-hed was a quirky profile or narrative, usually brilliantly reported, a master class in feature writing: Carrie Dolan on fainting goats, Barry Newman on a man who has a doctorate in bug gunk, or Tony Horwitz on going to work in a slaughterhouse. Breaking news, no matter how shocking, was relegated to a brisk summary in two regular columns. This was a serious newspaper for serious readers, and it became the favored daily of the financial and business classes, men and women too busy making money to worry about the more sensational stories of the day.

When journalists worry about the decline of newspapers, this sort of seriousness is what they fear is being lost. The Internet is in many ways a superior medium for journalism. It costs virtually nothing, in contrast to multimillion-dollar printing presses, giant rolls of paper and tankers of ink, and fleets of delivery trucks, to say nothing of the thousands of laborers needed to operate the equipment and distribute the product. But while the Web is rapidly destroying the business model that sustained all of the above, it has yet to develop institutions capable of replacing print newspapers as vehicles for great in-depth journalism, or conscious of themselves as upholding a public trust. Instead, the Web gives voice to opinionated,

unedited millions. In the digital world, ignorance and crudity share the platform with rigor and taste; the independent journalist shares the platform with spinmeisters and con artists. Cable television and satellite radio have taken broadcast journalism in the same direction, crowding out the once-dominant networks, which strove for the ideal of objectivity, with new channels that all but advertise their politics. When all news is spun, we live in a world of propaganda.

The worst part of this is, the public doesn't seem to care.

Neither does Rupert Murdoch. The Australian mogul has never embraced the religion of modern American journalism. He scorns the pursuit of Pulitzers and sees the high-end work it rewards as journalists writing stories to impress other journalists. And he doesn't buy the ideal of objectivity. He sees it as pretense—or hypocrisy—because he perceives a distinct liberal skew to the established journalistic powers. In Murdoch's view, the public is best served not by objectivity, which he regards as impossible, but by "balance."

"It's very hard to be neutral," he told an audience at

have done in my life has been to create competition ... We want to give people choices. The more choices, the better it is. To think that the media is concentrating is ignoring the facts. It is being fragmented in a thousand ways. I would agree with you that that's good. It doesn't suit my business, but ..."

The audience laughed. He had disarmed them.

"Fair and Balanced"—the slogan of his right-leaning, flag-waving Fox News Channel—is an international joke, but Murdoch can embrace that slogan with a straight face because he means something particular by it. He means that its distinctively conservative tilt balances out the big liberal powers that dominate the media landscape.

The same worldview promises to shape his war on *The New York Times*. It would be hard to imagine Murdoch coloring *The Journal's* crisply intelligent editorial pages any more conservative than they already are. But he can expand the number of pages devoted to opinion, as he has already done, and he can build *The Journal* into a more general newspaper, broadening its coverage into the arts, religion, education, sports, and politics—areas where *The Times* is the dominant tastemaker and trendsetter. Murdoch sees *The Times* not just as a paper with

Murdoch has never embraced the religion of modern American journalism. He scorns the pursuit of Pulitzers as journalists writing to impress other journalists.

Georgetown University last April. "The fact is that CNN has always been extremely liberal, and never had a Republican or conservative voice on it. We would say that the difference is that we [at Fox] have equal voices from both sides. The more voices the better, and let's have them from all sides."

He rejects the idea that the media should be dominated by a few respected, independent voices; he embraces instead a din of competing voices and interests. He is a Jeffersonian, a believer in a lively free market of ideas (except, of course, where it doesn't suit his interests—notably in China, where he's willing to make nice with the oppressive regime), and he scoffs at those who see danger in his acquisitiveness, at those who worry about the ever-widening reach of his media empire. A young woman at the Georgetown event complained to him directly.

"As a citizen, I'm scared," she said. "Please convince me that this is not a threat to democracy."

"Is all media in one hand bad for democracy? Absolutely," Murdoch said. "We are a tiny fraction of the media landscape. There are millions of voices out there. We certainly don't have any monopolistic effect. Everything I

primarily liberal politics but as a bastion of cultural elitism that wields a disproportionate influence over all aspects of American life. He wants his *Journal* to reflect another point of view, and to give people another choice.

What is the Murdochian point of view? It is not so easy to predict. His interests are dizzyingly diverse and famously open to change. He is a social liberal and a strong advocate of unfettered international trade. Other than that, he tends to be conservative, but he is also influenced by personalities, and has reportedly cozied up to the Clintons and warmed to Barack Obama. His various newspapers have staked a variety of public positions that are at least occasionally at odds with Murdoch's own—*The Times* of London, for instance, has been consistently critical of the repressive Communist regime in China, despite its owner's blatant and well-documented kowtowing.

He may well choose to take such a hands-off approach to *The Journal's* editorial product, if only to avoid trampling its eminent reputation, but no matter how scrupulously Murdoch avoids turning it into his global mouthpiece, it will be nearly impossible for him to avoid the appearance of doing so. His tentacles are so many and so long, it is

not unusual for *The Journal* to carry, in a single issue, three or four headlines touching upon its owner's dealings and interests—everything from new film and television releases to News Corporation's various global acquisition efforts. *The Journal* won a Pulitzer Prize in 2007 for its reporting on how the rapid economic growth in China has caused great troubles for the Chinese government and its people. These were stories that would not have pleased the Communist rulers Murdoch has been assiduously courting for decades. (Most of the staff of this prize-winning China bureau signed a petition urging the Bancroft family not to sell to Murdoch, arguing that his ownership would directly undercut their credibility, if not their professional freedom.)

At least some industry observers are willing to give Murdoch the benefit of the doubt on this.

A RAFT OF GRIEF

The raft that means "a great number" is not related at all to the raft that carries people or their possessions in the water. The two words are homonyms.

—Morris Dictionary of Word and Phrase Origins

If only there *were* a boat,
low and long and loaded
with all we'd brought or built:
the fatal inattentions,
anxieties and ties
that time had sanctified,
our good and bad intentions,
rages, lapses, and aches.
If only it were that easy,
to stand only ankle-
deep in the sullied water,
hoisting our shared cargo,
sinking no further beneath
its weight. If only the boat
did not need a rower;
we'd push it off together
then wade to opposite banks
absolved at last, forever,
buoyant, watching it go.

—CHELSEA RATHBURN

Chelsea Rathburn's first collection of poems, *The Shifting Line*, received the Richard Wilbur Award in 2005. She lives in Decatur, Georgia.

"I think he has enough sense not to trash what makes the newspaper so valuable," said Rick Edmonds of the Poynter Institute. "He has owned *The Times* of London for more than 20 years, and it is still a serious newspaper."

Serious, perhaps, but few Londoners would argue that the newspaper is anything like what it once was. Robert Block, a veteran *Journal* reporter who now covers the space beat for the *Orlando Sentinel*, worked for *The Times* in the late 1990s—more than a decade after Murdoch effectively dragged it from its pinnacle as the leading British newspaper and turned it into a hustling tabloid engaged in an incessant battle for sensational scoops. As a correspondent in South Africa, Block ran headlong into the consequences of that transformation. His editor insisted one day that he get an unsupervised interview with a 10-year-old boy at the center of an international custody dispute. Every newspaper in London was gunning for the story. Block knew where the boy was, outside Johannesburg, and knew that his parents were not at home.

"Do you have kids?" he asked his editor.

"Yes," the man said.

"How would you feel if a reporter came after your child without approaching you first?"

"Look," he recalls his editor saying. "It's not your fucking kid and it's not my fucking kid. Now go do your fucking job."

Block refused, and quit. He joined *The Wall Street Journal* precisely because it was a newspaper whose values and priorities ran the opposite way. It wasn't just the paper's commitment to in-depth journalism, it was the commitment to finding unusual, unexpected stories, to giving readers not what they wanted every morning but stories they had never heard about before, and would hear about nowhere else—"You know, stories where you peel back the skin on something and really look underneath," he said. Block fell in love with the paper and stayed for nearly 11 years. Last October, when it became apparent that Murdoch's effort to buy Dow Jones would prevail, he grabbed a parachute and leapt, taking a job with the *Sentinel*. It was the equivalent of a power hitter for the New York Yankees opting to play for his scrappy hometown minor-league team.

"I knew that with his coming, there would inevitably be a clash of cultures," Block said. "Murdoch is nothing if not consistent. I knew that his coming and the changes he would bring would cause a certain amount of pain. At my age and stage of my career, I just knew it was something that I did not want to go through."

Murdoch is a panderer. Like most businessmen, he wants to figure out what his customers want and then deliver it. The salvation of *The Wall Street Journal* may well be that its highly educated readership wants precisely what the paper has been offering for more

than a half century. But at the very least, it's clear that Murdoch intends to give that tradition a good working over.

In interviews before and after he bought Dow Jones, Murdoch complained about the length of *Journal* articles, and said he was not enamored of its a-heds and leders. Robert Thomson reiterated those points in his initial conference calls and meetings with the newspaper's far-flung staff, insisting that the fierce competition for these page-one slots would no longer be the only mark of excellence at the paper. He has echoed his boss's call for shorter stories and a more aggressively competitive approach, even as he has reassured staffers that he and Murdoch both respect and admire *The Journal's* traditions—positions that appear contradictory.

"Rupert clearly likes the *Wall Street Journal* brand," Block said. "But he doesn't like the things that made the brand what it was. It is clear that the long-form journalism that made so many of us want to join the newspaper just doesn't matter that much to Rupert."

What matters is winning the war—against *The New York Times*, and against everyone else. In his first months as the new boss, Thomson held several meetings with his top underlings during which he opened that day's issue of the *Financial Times* and circled the news items that

wasn't just a meaningless in-house contest; it was part of a long-running journalistic tour de force.

"Regular readers of *The Journal* were able to get a real sense of what was happening in the business world by reading those in-depth stories," said Gene Roberts, the much-heralded retired editor and reporter who once helmed *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. "They often gave you a sense of sea changes in society and the economy. It was why *The Journal* always had a strong readership not just in the big cities, but in fly-over country. They were consistently well reported, well written, well edited, and they were trustworthy and fascinating. They offered the kind of deep information that smart investors could make use of. It was a formula that worked for a long time, and it didn't stop working."

Under Thomson, though, the leder is shrinking and clearly endangered. The a-hed seems to sink lower and lower on the front page every day, like a setting sun.

"But it's still there," said Kate Kelly, who covers investment banking for the paper and who turned down a job offer from *The New York Times* last year just as Murdoch purchased *The Journal*. She received an encouraging phone call from the new owner after she decided to stay, something she doubts would have happened under Dow Jones ownership.

'Rupert clearly likes the *Wall Street Journal* brand,' a former staffer said.
'But he doesn't like the things
that made the brand what it was.'

The Journal had missed. (One editor noted, "You don't have to do something like that very often for it to make a big impression.") At a session in Washington, Thomson irritated the bureau by repeatedly comparing *The Journal* unfavorably with the *FT*, which his staffers regard as a far less impressive product—and which is, in fact, the very model of a business and financial newspaper that scorns the ambitious, in-depth story in favor of the scoop.

There is nothing wrong, of course, with a newspaper filled with actual news, but the best papers do not define what is news exactly the same way every other outlet does. This is particularly true of *The Journal*, which institutionalized zigging when everyone else zagged. Reporters at *The Journal* have always produced news stories off their beats, but they also pursued stories that other outlets did not, and the way to get ahead was to score with a leder or an a-hed on page one. *Journal* reporters tend to be a little bit more like M.B.A.s than scribes at other newspapers, and amid the competition to see who could score more of the ambitious and quirky page-one stories, some reporters actually kept spreadsheets of their performance. But this

And she's right that the long narrative story has so far survived. Yaroslav Trofimov's April yarn about dolphin teeth being used as currency in the Solomon Islands was in the finest tradition of the eccentric a-hed, and reporter Kevin Helliker's February saga of Toby Phalen Young, a middle-aged, respected Missouri wife and mother who fell in love with a convicted murderer 20 years her junior and helped him escape from prison, started in a box above the fold on page one and jumped to two full inside pages. The reporter said, "I encountered nothing but enthusiasm."

But the enthusiasm here was for a story, no matter how legitimate and well done, that contained undeniably sensational elements—a forbidden love affair, a prison escape, a respected community member's bizarre fall from grace. It had "feature film" written all over it; indeed, the movie rights have been sold. There isn't a newspaper in the country that wouldn't have wanted the story. But it's hardly typical of the more obscure subject matter that traditionally defined *The Journal's* most prized offerings. And the old *Journal* didn't take its cues from what other newspapers would want.

Beating other papers at their own game is exactly what the new ownership seems to prize. In a conference call to the paper's Washington bureau in April, Thomson pointed enthusiastically to a page-one political story by the reporter Monica Langley. Headlined "He's Back," the article detailed the increasing influence of Bill Clinton on the presidential campaign of his wife, Hillary. The new publisher-editor described it as "perfect in every way." But Thomson's Washington-bureau audience was merelywhelmed. True, the Langley piece was timely, it came on the heels of a resurgence in Hillary's campaign, and what it lacked in access it made up for in provocative analysis. In other words, it was the kind of story *The New York Times* would have loved to have. But the old *Journal* would not have cared, or at least not that much.

"It is preposterous to think that we would want to dilute our core competency," Thomson told a group of the paper's editors and reporters in a conference call this spring. But many at the paper fear that this is exactly what he is doing. Since Murdoch took over the paper, general-news items have proliferated. The What's News columns on page one, which formerly offered simply an executive briefing of the day's business and general news and effectively advertised *The Journal's* nonchalance about mainstream preoccupations, today has become a table of contents, each item referencing by page number a fuller story inside. So far, these stories are unimpressive—often just a brief compilation of wire-service reporting. In a world where many readers already know the news before they pick up the newspaper—and where *The Journal's* Web site, the natural place to emphasize breaking news, remains sequestered for the most part behind a subscribers-only firewall—this practice doesn't seem to make much sense.

It does, however, reflect classic Murdochian principles, and Murdoch does seem to have a sense for what sells. He apparently intends to expand the *Journal* staff to add meat to that broadened coverage, which would mean more stories like those found everywhere else. But even if aping the competition increased the newspaper's readership—and it is hard to see how it would—it would also destroy what made *The Journal* great. In addition to stressing more breaking, general-news stories, Thomson has made clear that he intends to "clarify reporting lines," which is taken to mean that he plans to thin the ranks of the mid-level editors who were the newspaper's line of defense against sloppiness and error. It is worth noting that the number of corrections in the first quarter of this year, under Murdoch's reign, has risen by more than 25 percent compared with the first quarter of 2007, an increase that the company says reflects an increase in the number of stories the new *Journal* is running.

"People are running around frightened and confused," said one longtime *Journal* reporter. "The push is toward

news, news, news. It feels like Murdoch wants to make us more like every other newspaper in the country."

"Murdoch says he wants to turn it into something more like *The New York Times*, but I suspect it will end up looking more like *USA Today*," said Roberts.

Another longtime *Journal* reporter remembers that a former editor in chief, Paul Steiger, used to warn reporters who complained about the paper's hidebound ways, "It could be worse—we could be owned by Rupert Murdoch."

"Let me say one thing," Murdoch told his new staff on the day he took over the paper. "As we go forward, you will probably find, aaaaah, an evah-increasing concentration on globalization, the whole world, and digitization. But in spite of that, for many, many years to come, *The Wall Street Journal* will be a key frontispiece to everything we do. So thank you very, very much."

If the new owner's comments were jovial and enthusiastic, Thomson's follow-up sent a chill through the newsroom.

"The world is changing exponentially," he said. "While it's right to be respectful of the past, these days it is certainly fatal to be bound by history. He who stands still will be overrun."

Their audience was of roughly three minds, according to a *Journal* staffer who dissected the newsroom's mood for me. There were those who were already making plans to leave, or knew they would jump ship at the first decent opportunity. He called this group "the Extremists"; it included reporters like the Pulitzer-winning Bandler, who recently left for *Fortune* magazine. Then there were those who knew that the takeover could spell disaster for the kind of journalism they loved, but who were reluctant to believe that Murdoch would really dismantle something so admirable and successful. He called this group "the Hopefuls."

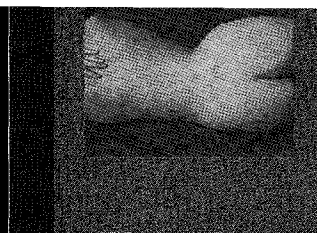
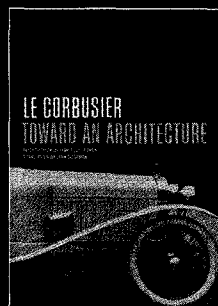
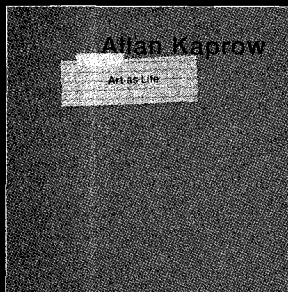
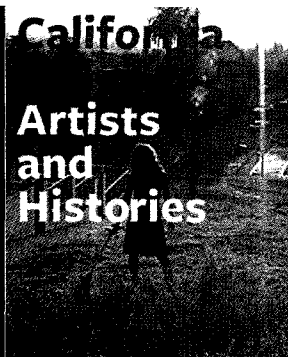
"And then there was the third portion of the room," he said. "This is a big group. These are the people who see the tribulations of the industry, who felt sure that if nothing had changed there would be certain cutbacks and layoffs in *The Journal's* future, who were feeling the general dread that all newsrooms in America feel right now. And they thought, *Here's an owner who is going to invest! My job is secure! He'll beef up the paper, and even if this means we may become more like Fox News, it's worth it because we will still have the opportunity to do great work.* These are the people who believed that Marcus Brauchli would save them. This is the group that I call 'Naive.'"

At the end of that session, with his typical insouciance, Murdoch again took the mike, to conclude the show.

"Well, I think that's all we have to say," he said. "So you better get back to work and make sure you're not scooped tomorrow." ■

Mark Bowden is an Atlantic national correspondent.

THE G



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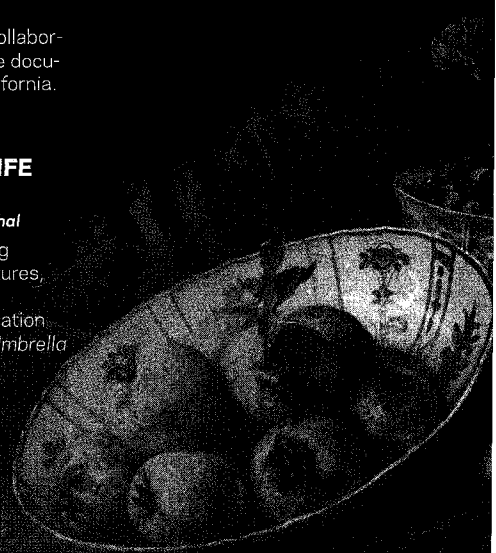
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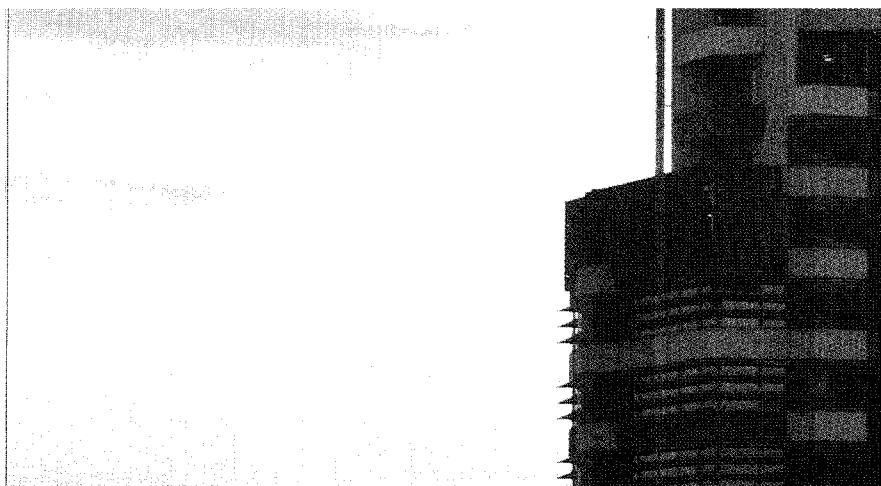
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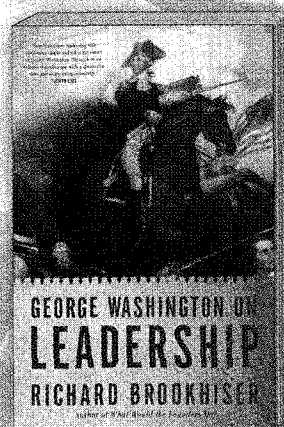
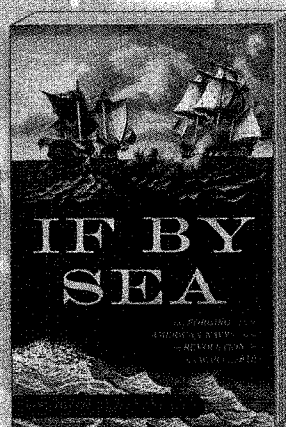
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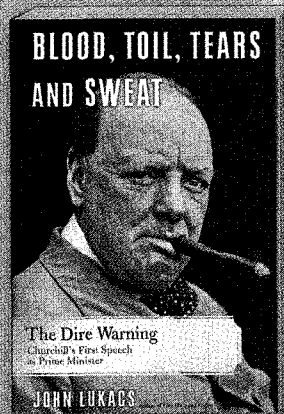


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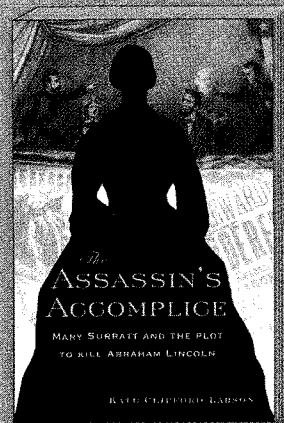
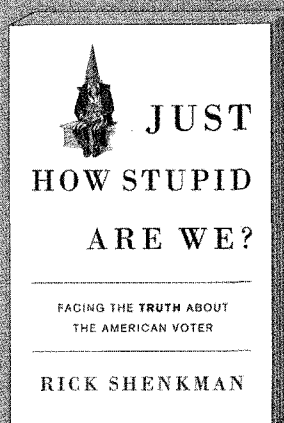


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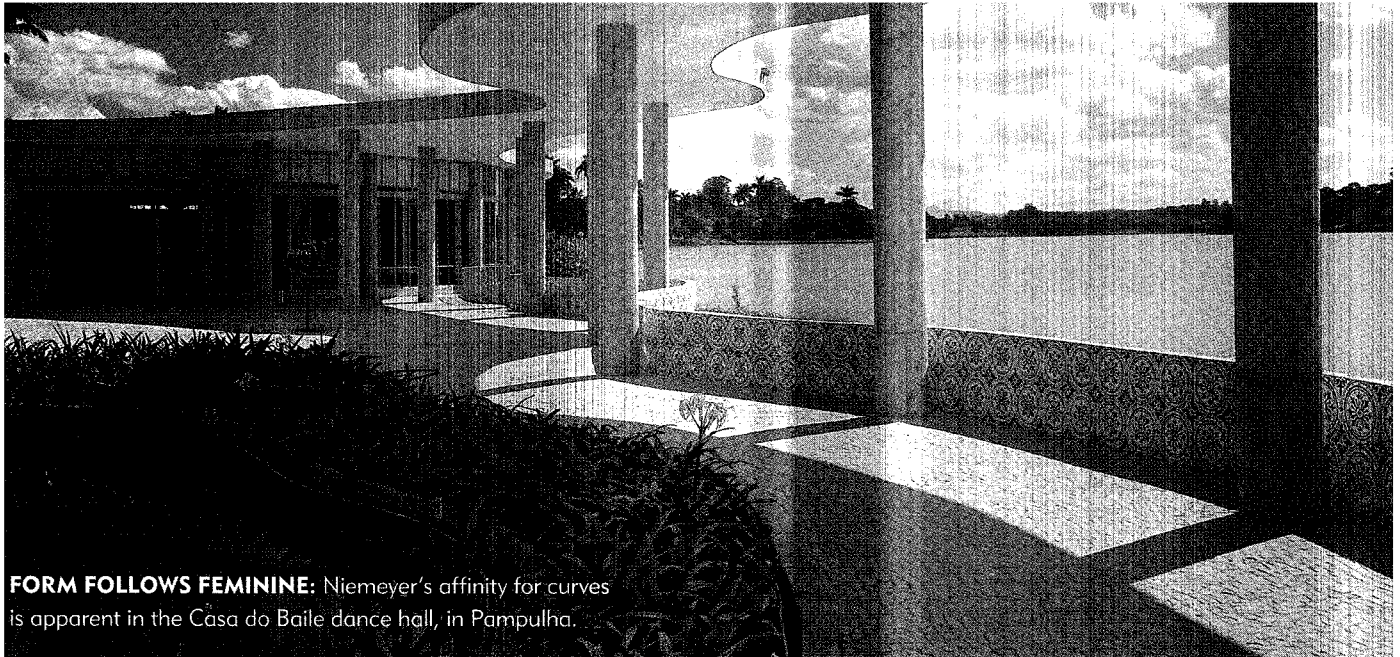


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A Vision in Concrete

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

It was a heroic and inhuman scheme. From 1956 to 1960, Brazil—in an effort to cleanse itself of its colonial past, to flee its burgeoning social afflictions, and to fulfill its long-prophesied emergence as a great power—conjured a new capital, Brasília, on an empty plateau in an endless savanna 3,500 feet above sea level. The city's planner, the architect Lúcio Costa, found the setting “excessively vast ... out of scale, like an ocean, with immense clouds moving over it.” No invented city could accommodate itself to this wilderness. Instead, Costa declared, Brasília would create its own landscape: he devised a city on a scale as daunting as the setting itself. In conformity not with its environment but with those modernist utopian theories of the rational, sterile “Radiant City,” Brasília was not to grow organically but to

be born, Costa said, “as if she had been fully grown”—he even refused to visit the site, because he didn't want reality to impinge on the purity of the original design. Brasília was the first place built to be approached by jet, and the city's roads—inspired by Robert Moses's deadening expressways belting New York's outer boroughs—were like runways. Here was a city without a traffic light, containing thoroughfares without crosswalks. The result was (or should have been) obvious, as Simone de Beauvoir reported after visiting Brasília the year it was inaugurated:

What possible interest could there be in wandering about? ... The street, that meeting ground of ... passers-by, of stores and houses, of vehicles and pedestrians ... does not exist in Brasília and never will.

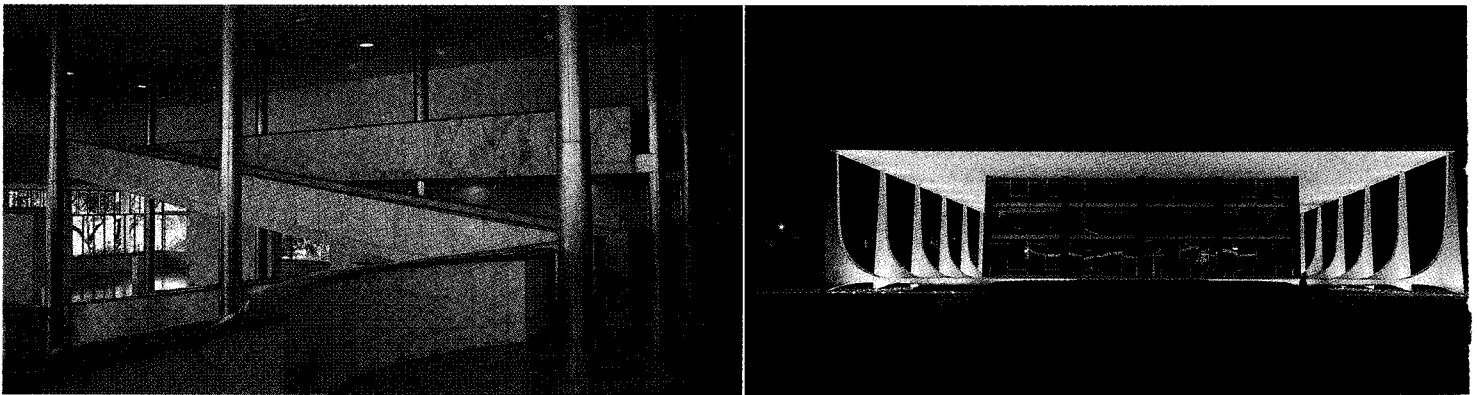
Today, the city is quite correctly regarded as a colossally wrong turn in urban planning—but Brasília, paradoxically, contains some of the most graceful modernist government buildings ever produced. All were designed by Oscar Niemeyer (now 100 years old and still working), who helped select Costa's master plan and who was the creative influence behind the building and shape of the city. Both facts must be considered in any effort to reckon the legacy of Niemeyer—the last great architect of the modernist ascendancy—and his relationship to modernism, a relationship that both spurred and warped his creative achievement.

A crop of books published over the past few years illuminates both Brazil's extraordinary achievements in modern architecture from the 1930s to the 1960s (Lauro Cavalcanti's clear and intel-

ligent *When Brazil Was Modern* and the ambitious if at times pretentious *Brazil's Modern Architecture*, edited by Elisabetta Andreoli and Adrian Forty) and specific aspects of the career of Niemeyer, an architect revered in his country as its greatest living cultural treasure (*Oscar Niemeyer: Houses*, by Alan Hess, and *Modernist Paradise*, by Michael Webb, an opulent explication of the only Niemeyer-designed residence built in the United States). These join such older

and cultural geography of Copacabana Beach, and the design-selection process for the UN headquarters. The book is also a marvel of presentation. Philippou fluidly explicates her narrative and arguments with detailed site diagrams and maps; drawings, plans, and elevations; photographic comparisons of buildings historically linked to Niemeyer's; and her own lavish, precise photography of Niemeyer's work, including both general views and details.

Philippou demonstrates that Niemeyer's highest achievements are profoundly informed by a Brazilian aesthetic, which has long made sinuous forms a basic element of its vocabulary (see the mosaic pavements of alternating black and white waves, both from the colonial period and, on Copacabana, from the early 20th century). True, since the 1960s Niemeyer's penchant for curves and, worse, flying-saucer shapes has gotten the better of him (a penchant he could



LYRICAL MODERNISM: Niemeyer at his best (the Casino in Pampulha and the Supreme Court, in Brasília)

works as *Brazil Builds*, the Museum of Modern Art's seminal introduction to Brazilian modernism; Henrique E. Mindlin's *Modern Architecture in Brazil*; Norma Evenson's *Two Brazilian Capitals: Architecture and Urbanism in Rio and Brasília*; David Underwood's *Oscar Niemeyer and Brazilian Free-Form Modernism*; and Niemeyer's self-indulgent but (intentionally and otherwise) revealing memoir, *The Curves of Time*.

None of these books approaches Styliane Philippou's forthcoming *Oscar Niemeyer: Curves of Irreverence*, one of the richest historical, cultural, and aesthetic assessments of an architect's work I've read. To be sure, Philippou, a British architect and architectural historian, indulges in some academic gobbledygook (that marker of hip academese, "the Other," makes its appearance far too often), but in authoritatively assessing Niemeyer's work and its place in architectural and Brazilian cultural history, she has marshaled such diverse subjects as 18th-century colonial Portuguese architecture, bossa nova, the topography

Although he was a disciple of Le Corbusier's and clearly embraced modernism, Niemeyer, with his love of curves and organic shapes, offered a jaunty alternative to the geometric severity of the International Style (a "monotonous and repetitive architecture ... so easy to create that it quickly spread from the United States to Japan," as he characterizes it in his own, often repetitive, memoir). Confirming Niemeyer's assertions, Philippou repeatedly shows how eroticism inflected Niemeyer's approach—"form follows feminine" is one of the architect's many, somewhat tiresome, pronouncements—and how that approach quite literally grew out of his girl-watching (something of a dirty old man, he's forever explaining his architecture by sketching women's breasts and backsides for mock-scandalized journalists). He was obviously also inspired by the undulating beaches and topography of his native Rio de Janeiro (his longtime studio, in the penthouse of an Art Deco landmark building, takes in famously sweeping views of Copacabana and Sugarloaf).

indulge because of engineering advances in his favorite medium, reinforced concrete, that increased the plasticity of that already famously plastic material)—too many of his later buildings, such as the 1996 Museum of Contemporary Art in Niterói, smack of kitschy Futurama. Niemeyer's work was best when Brazilian idioms tempered his modernism—and when modernism's crispness tempered his tendency toward biomorphic and sculptural excess. Philippou makes this point clear in her brilliant, meticulous analysis of Niemeyer's first masterpiece, the 1943 Ministry of Education and Public Health in Rio (the design team was made up of Brazilian architects, and Le Corbusier himself served as a consultant, but Niemeyer led the group and designed the project's key elements). Hailed by MoMA upon its completion as "the most beautiful government building in the Western hemisphere," the ministry boasts the first use of the curtain wall—which would soon be ubiquitous, as the defining feature of the glass boxes of the International Style (think Lever

STYLIANE PHILIPPOU, OSCAR NIEMEYER, CURVES OF IRREVERENCE, VALE

House). Philippou reveals the peculiarly Brazilian admixture of this modernist masterpiece: the tropical rooftop and street-level gardens featuring organically curved paths and tropical plants (up until this time, native plants were considered unworthy of serious landscape design); the Moorish-Portuguese tiles used on the building's wall mosaic (itself a somewhat unmodernist embellishment); the *brises-soleil* inspired by wooden Brazilian colonial Baroque antecedents (to this day, they obviate the use of air-conditioning in this tropical high-rise); the free-form designs on the carpeting (a high level of detail, craft, and finish characterize this and all of Niemeyer's best buildings, although those qualities are hardly typical of all of his work); and the shady plaza, created by cylindrical columns, which unifies the building site with the parallel streets abutting it and is reminiscent of the cloisters of 17th-century Brazilian monasteries.

All of Niemeyer's early masterpieces—the Brazilian Pavilion at the 1939 New York World's Fair and the Casino in Pamulha, buildings that married the precision and clarity of the International Style with sinuous, organic lines; the Boavista Bank building in Rio, whose undulating glass-brick walls covering its rear and lateral facades created “one of the most beautiful internal spaces of modern architecture,” as Cavalcanti correctly avers; his house at Canoas, which roofed a slick glass pavilion with a seemingly weightless, free-form concrete slab resembling a lily pad, thus creating a shady overhang that allowed the outdoors and indoors to merge—fused modernism's astringent grace with a sauntering, often lyrical style. That approach would culminate in Niemeyer's three best “palaces” in Brasília: the presidential residence, the Foreign Ministry, and the Supreme Court. These seats of power were in fact inspired by houses (*fazendas*, those colonial Brazilian, low-slung plantation houses with their colonnaded verandas), which helps account for their unimposing grandeur. With their poised and delicate colonnades and their almost buoyant, paper-thin

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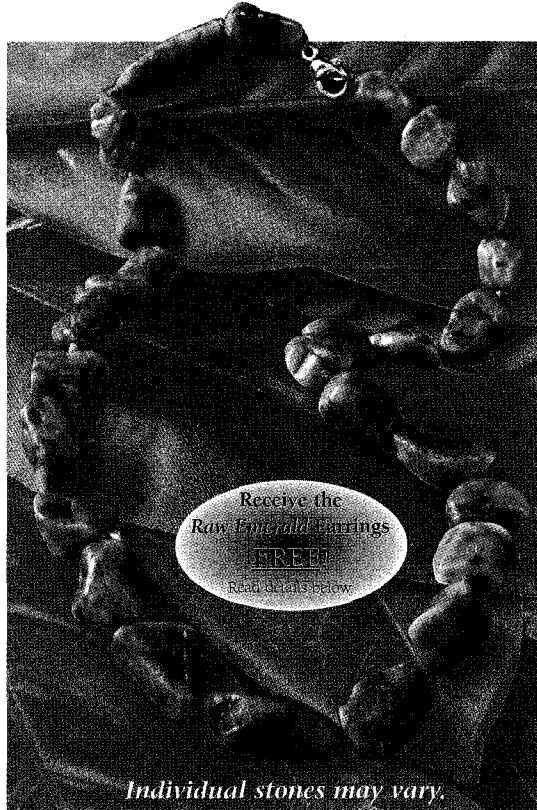
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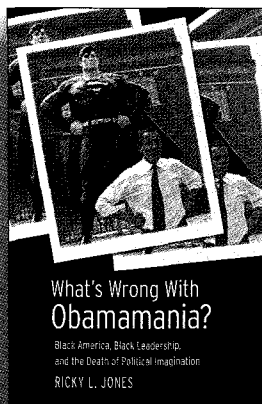
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platforms and roofs, these limpid buildings fairly float upon their sites. They're at once monumental and ethereal, as Philippou makes clear:

The Supreme Court's columns embrace the glass box ... like pleats fluidly unfolding and refolding, carrying the eye along. Their marble cladding touches the earth at one infinitely small point ... The fluid, fan-like effect is best appreciated when walking along the verandas: the great white marble leaves open and close languorously, in slow, perpetual motion, seemingly the source of the cool breeze under the large roof overhangs.

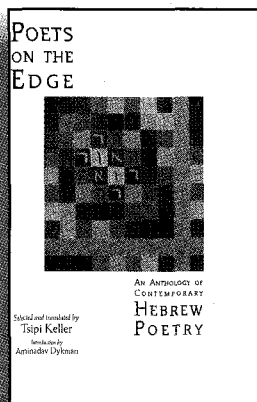
These imperishable achievements, though, hardly make up for the rest of the city. In Brasília, too many of Niemeyer's other sculptural edifices (he designed all of the major government buildings, and much of the housing) are soullessly set in immense paved fields that offer few places to sit and little refuge from the blinding sun, save for the colossal shadows cast by the buildings themselves. To be sure, Brasília's reputation is in part the result of its history: although built by a progressive and more or less democratic government, it became the seat of an authoritarian regime four years after it was completed, and remained so for 21 years (to Zaha Hadid, Brasília means "all those wide streets for the army to drive through"). But it *is* an awful city—even juror Ada Louise Huxtable's tribute accompanying Niemeyer's citation for the 1988 Pritzker Prize (the equivalent of the Nobel Prize for architecture) had to acknowledge Brasília's horrendous error. With Brasília, Niemeyer seemed to have embraced, or at least acceded to, the worst aspect of architectural modernism—its antiseptic urban theory—and in the post-Brasília period, when his work has too often been hokily sculptural or frighteningly over-scaled (see his University of Constantine in Algeria, or his Maison de la Culture in Le Havre), he seems to have forsaken its best aspects: the grace and lucidity born of its restraint. ▀

Benjamin Schwarz is *The Atlantic's* literary editor and national editor.



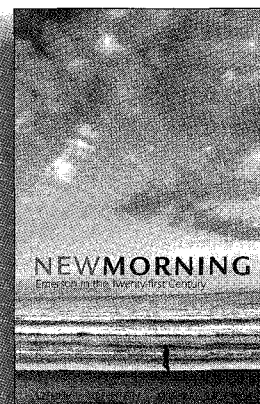
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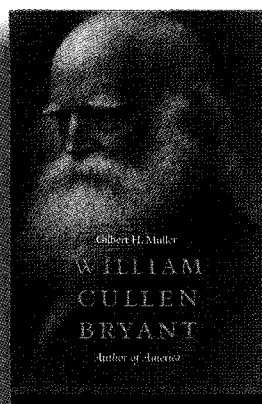
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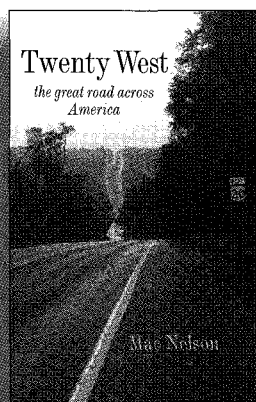
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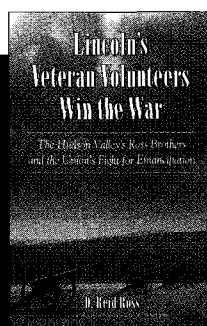


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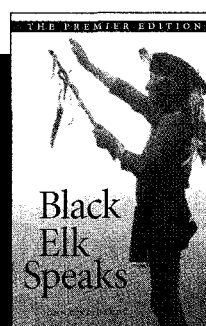


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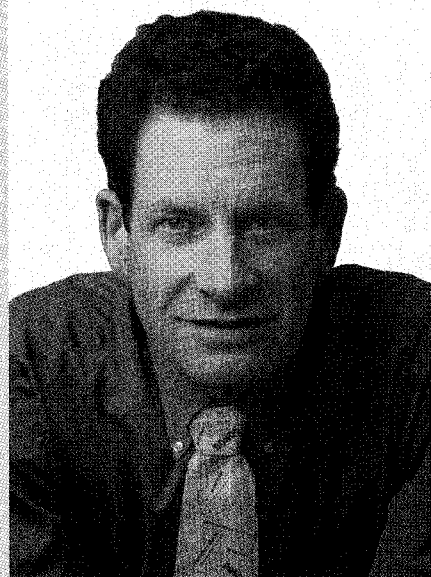
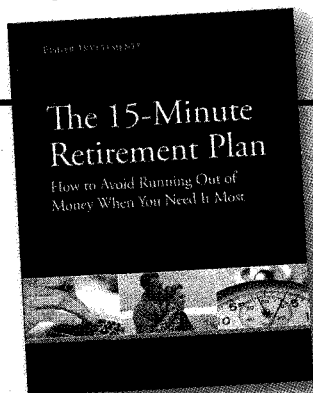
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I Choose My Choice!

BY SANDRA TSING LOH

As you may have heard, some 50 years after Betty Friedan sprang us from domestic jail, we women ... seem to have made a mess of it. What do we want? Not to be men (wrong again, Freud!), at least not businessmen—although slacker men, sans futon and bong, might appeal. In these post-Lisa-Belkin-*New-York-Times-Magazine*-“Opt-Out” years, we’ve now learned the worst: even female Harvard graduates are fleeing high-powered careers for a kinder, gentler Martha Stewart Living. Not only does the Problem Have a Name, it has its own line of Fiestaware!

And what are our fallen M.B.A. sisters of Crimson doing? Kvells one Harvard-grad-turned-stay-at-home-mom, on the subject of her days:

I dance and sing and play the guitar and listen to NPR. I write letters to my family, my congressional representatives, and to newspaper editors. My kids and I play tag and catch, we paint, we explore, we climb trees and plant gardens together. We bike instead of using the car. We read, we talk, we laugh. Life is good. I never dust.

Is the mass media to blame (again!) for pushing women out of the workplace? Not so much. On our zeitgeist-setting TV shows, it’s only the housewives who are desperate. Work is fun! The Manhattan working gals of *Sex and the City*, whose days revolve chiefly around dishing over cocktails, are essentially ’50s suburban housewives, trophy wives of (in this case) glamorous if emotionally distant New York jobs—skyscraper-housed entities with good addresses and doormen that handsomely fund their lifestyles while requiring that they show up to service



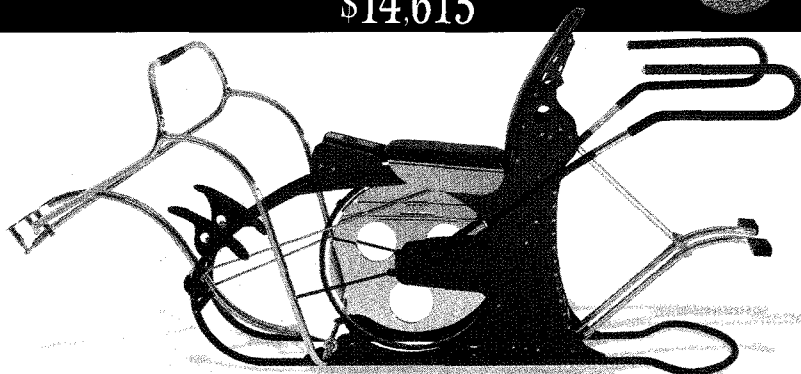
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them only infrequently, in bustiers and heels. I want a vague job like the one Charlotte has, in the art gallery she never goes to; or the lawyer job Miranda has (charcoal suits and plenty o' time for lunch with the gals); or Samantha's PR gig, throwing SoHo loft parties and giving blow jobs to freakishly endowed men (actually, that's the one job I don't want); I want to spend my days like "writer" Carrie, lolling in bed in her underwear, smoking and occasionally updating her quasi-bohemian equivalent of a MySpace page.

In real life, female journalists (particularly sex columnists) have frightening stalkers, dour editors who begin phone conversations with "This is not your best," and paychecks so thin they trigger not just an amusing episode in which some Jimmy Choos must be returned but years of fluorescent-lit subway rides to a part-time job teaching ESL at some community college on Long Island. In an ugly if typical turn, one's column is suddenly moved from the Manhattan section to the North Jersey "auto buy" section because of the arrival of a younger, hotter writer. In real life, workmen would unceremoniously peel Carrie's ad off the side of the bus and replace it with an ad touting the peppy new relationship blog of Miley Cyrus.

An assault on the flaccid, pastel-hued *Real Simple* values of today's over-educated, underperforming homebound women, Linda Hirshman's marvelously cranky *Get to Work ... And Get a Life, Before It's Too Late* drew an Internet hailstorm. (Those stay-at-home mothers—like AARP members, they've got time to type.) Short, biting, funny, and deliciously quotable (Hirshman is like an old-guard feminist Huckabee), *Get to Work* is a great value in terms of making the most of your limited reading hours. (Susan Faludi's *Stiffed* ran 672 pages; my galley of *Get* was a slim 94.)

Hirshman's thumbnail review of recent feminist history makes for prickly, entertaining reading. "Just over thirty years ago," she rails, "the feminist movement turned from Betty Friedan, the big-nosed, razor-tongued moralist," to Gloria

Steinem. Not only did the honey-tressed blonde clearly have a smaller nose, as Hirshman implies, but "Gloria was nicer than Betty." The pliant undercover Bunny shepherded in a "useless choice feminism" of soft convictions and "I gotta be me" moral relativism. Hirshman quotes *Sex and the City's* hapless Charlotte, who, when given flak for quitting her job to please her smug first husband, can only wail plaintively, "I choose my choice! I choose my choice!"

Hirshman fires with both barrels (Faster, Pussy-cat! Kill! Kill!) at today's mommies, who are so busy sniffing the Martha Stewart paint chips that they have forgotten Friedan's exhortation to get out and change the world. In reference to the NPR-listening, tree-climbing Harvard grad quoted above, Hirshman acidly notes:

Assuming she is telling the truth, and she does live in the perfect land of a Walgreens' ad, is not all this biking and tree climbing a bit too much of the inner child for any normal adult? Although child rearing, unlike housework, is important and can be difficult, it does not take well-developed political skills to rule over creatures smaller than you are, weaker than you are, and completely dependent upon you for survival or thriving. Certainly, it's not using your reason to do repetitive, physical tasks, whether it's cleaning or driving the car pool. My correspondent's life does have a certain Tom Sawyerish quality to it, but she has no power in the world. Why would the congressmen she writes to listen to someone whose life so resembles that of a toddler's, Harvard degree or no?

Ouch!

Not afraid, in her own big-nosed, razor-tongued way, to alienate everyone (or at least half of everyone), Hirshman considers all stay-at-home mothers fish in her barrel (think fish pedaling tiny aquatic bicycles). No target is too small: Hirshman even tears mercilessly into the

sleep-deprived new mothers who've made the unfortunate decision to share their rambling thoughts on something called Bloggingbaby.com. (Really, aren't there

any blogs over which the Web should draw its gentle curtain? Apparently not.) But in fact, Hirshman insists, the problem starts well before motherhood. It begins when young women enter college and violate Hirshman's No. 1 rule of female emancipation: "Don't study art."

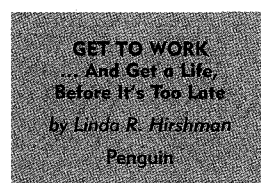
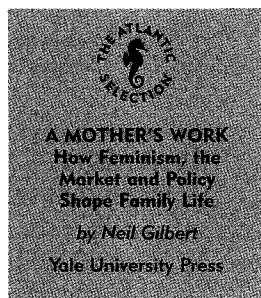
Why aren't the women who are outnumbering men in undergraduate institutions leading the information economy? "Because they're dabbling,"

she snaps. Here's yet another Problem That Has a Name: Frida Kahlo.

Everybody loves Frida Kahlo. Half Jewish, half Mexican, tragically injured when young, sexually linked to men and women, abused by a famous genius husband. Oh, and a brilliantly talented painter. If I was a feminazi, the first thing I'd ban would be books about Frida Kahlo. Because Frida Kahlo's life is not a model for women's lives. And if you're not Frida Kahlo and you major in art, you're going to wind up answering the phones at some gallery in Chelsea, hoping a rich male collector comes to rescue you.

As Woody Allen's own Whore of Mensa would sigh and pencil in the margin, "Yes, very true!" And don't we all know them, those defiant, dreadlocked young love-lies with their useless degrees in studio art, experimental fiction, modern dance, and gender studies, lactose-intolerant and unemployable: "I choose my choice! I choose my choice!"

Of course, Hirshman, with that somewhat unlovely, censorious tone, is being a tad simplistic. She leaves aside the matter of whether women driven to make piles of money are the same ones likely to incite meaningful social change. If the Harvard stay-at-home mom walked away from an attack-dog



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AN64

corporate-lawyer job with Exxon, I, for one, would rather see her playing tag and climbing trees. And although Hirshman did work as a lawyer (lawyer, along with doctor and judge, is the kind of high-degree, socially relevant job she approves of), she then became a professor of philosophy and women's studies. (Call the White House! We have a professor of philosophy on the line!)

Not that being an academic isn't a hell of a lot of fun; in fact, its very pleasantness contributes to a bias peculiar

to members of the thinktankerati. So argues Neil Gilbert, a renowned Berkeley sociologist, in *A Mother's Work: How Feminism, the Market and Policy Shape Family Life*. According to Gilbert, the debate over the value of women's work has been framed by those with a too-rosy view of employment,

mainly because the vast majority of those who publicly talk, think, and write about questions of gender equality, motherhood, and work in modern society are people who talk,

think, and write for a living. And they tend to associate with other people who, like themselves, do not have "real" jobs—professors, journalists, authors, artists, politicians, pundits, foundation program officers, think-tank scholars, and media personalities.

Many of them can set their own hours, choose their own workspace, get paid for thinking about issues that interest them, and, as a bonus, get to feel, by virtue of their career, important in the world. The professor admits that his own job in "university teaching is by and large divorced from the normal discipline of everyday life in the marketplace. It bears only the faintest resemblance to most work in the real world." In other words, for the "occupational elite" (as Gilbert calls this group), unlike for most people, going to work is not a drag.

Indeed, what does Linda Hirshman know about "work"? (It's a veritable WWE Smackdown of Academics!) Parries Gilbert:

Linda Hirshman claims that "the family—with its repetitious, socially invisible, physical tasks—is a necessary part of life, but allows fewer opportunities for full human flourishing than public spheres like the market or the government." Many people would no doubt find unpaid household chores less interesting than Professor Hirshman's job ... But walking up and down the supermarket aisle selecting food for a family dinner is a job that has more variety and autonomy than the paid work being done by the supermarket employees who stack the same shelves with the same food day after day, and those who stand in a narrow corner at the checkout counter all day tallying up the costs of purchases, and the workers next to them who pack the purchases into paper or plastic bags. That space in the market is a bit cramped for human flourishing.

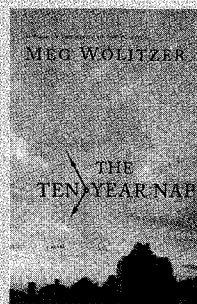
To be sure, attacking feminist criticism as being the extended whine of a privileged, educated upper class is as old as ... well, as bell hooks's 1984 critique of Friedan's *Feminine Mystique*:

NEW FICTION

Wolitzer's engaging novel focuses on women who are breath-takingly educated and fully prepared to fill the most-rigorous roles in the workplace, but who nevertheless spend a good portion of what might have been peak career-building time fully engrossed in child-rearing and homemaking. They have the resources—both external and internal—to be well-satisfied by such a course. At the same time, though, these women are the most inclined to doubt and wonder: having had the opportunity to make any choice at all, did they make the right one? And once they no longer have "the excuse of having a young child at home to use as a human shield against all questions about what [they] 'did,' " what then? With a light but needle-sharp touch and in a tone at once thoughtful and witty, Wolitzer explores this theme from nearly every possible angle. The cast of this richly peopled story features a group of likable friends in contemporary Manhattan with a wide range of talents and backgrounds, but also reaches back to include their mothers and out to incorporate a friend who has moved to the suburbs. Throughout, Wolitzer draws both fine and significant distinctions as she identifies types that her readers will recognize: the artist who didn't have the necessary single-minded drive; the promising student

who lost her way once she finished her classes; the English major who pragmatically chose the "enclosed pasture" of law school over the "open field" of literature. Her characters never collapse into stereotype. Among working mothers, for instance, she distinguishes between those in whom the strain was obvious—"they had folders clutched in one hand and a child's science project involving a potato and a battery in the other"—and the occasional, depressingly enviable one who managed to be feminine and maternal while possessing "power in the hard-shelled, armed male world." All of Wolitzer's characters are so articulate and insightful

that it's a pleasure to listen to them think. Whether depicting the subtle cues lovers emit to drive away intruders, or worries about a child who for no specific reason doesn't seem quite right, or the distinct motivations different women have for opting out of the workforce, or the sort of well-intentioned but inadequate present a husband would be likely to select for his child's private-school teacher (a Whitman's Sampler), Wolitzer's scenes are intensely observed and nuanced. Although "What now, at 40?" is the chief question of the novel, Wolitzer also delves deep into female friendships, relationships between women and their growing children, marriage, and the rewards and lack thereof that come with paid employment.



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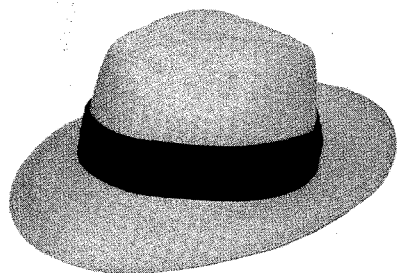
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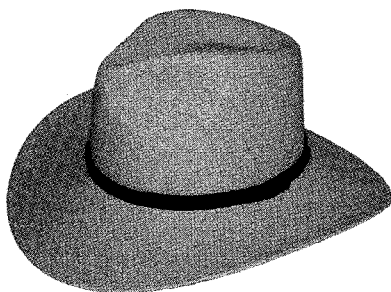
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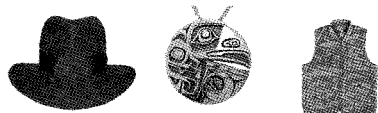
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"[Friedan] did not tell readers whether it was more fulfilling to be a maid, a babysitter, a factory worker, a clerk, or a prostitute than to be a leisure-class housewife." It's a point that keeps having to be made, though. And hooks's list doesn't even include the legions of colorless office jobs that most women endure, "real" jobs that trap them from eight to five in a cramped cubicle under hideous lighting. During the course of a *Sex and the City* workday you're likely to encounter Mr. Big, but at a "real" job you're far more likely to be thrown in with the pimply, fright-wigged characters of *Dilbert* or with Dwight Shrute from *The Office*, the show whose name is synonymous with tedium, idiocy, and despair.

But aren't women at home subject to the oppression of their chauvinistic, soul-crushing husbands? As if a mere human could compete with clogged freeways and Sisyphean paper pushing (or its more up-to-date equivalent, paperless pushing) and burnt-coffee-laced afternoons counting the acoustic tiles in stale conference rooms, and the hours spent arguing over the wording of a memo that within minutes after its dissemination will be dragged into the now-two-dimensional circular file. Unless he's an abusive alcoholic or something similar, to be more oppressive than a "real" job, a husband would have to possess tireless text-messaging thumbs: "Where's my dry cleaning?" "Did you pick up my dry

Hirshman insists that the problem starts when women enter college and violate the No. 1 rule of female emancipation: 'Don't study art.'

The eight-to-five routine entails quite a few repetitious, socially invisible physical tasks (think Rob Schneider's Richmeister on *Saturday Night Live*: "Makin' kahpies!"). Research suggests that such drudge work holds no special lure even for (free at last!) females. Citing a survey of 909 employed women on how they had felt during 16 different daily activities, Gilbert notes:

Employed women expressed a higher degree of enjoyment for shopping, preparing food, taking care of their children, and doing housework than for working at their jobs—an activity that was ranked at the next-to-lowest level of enjoyment, just above commuting to work.

Further, in a development that would shock only today's most radical feminists (where are those last two hiding? Buffalo?):

When it came to interactions with different partners, the women ranked interactions with their children as more enjoyable than those with clients/customers, coworkers, and bosses.

cleaning?" "Where are you shopping right now?" "No! No! I told you—no butter lettuce from Safeway, only Whole Foods!" (Come to think of it, this may be a fairly accurate bit of communication between a privileged mother and a micromanaged nanny.) Even providing a chilled martini at six o'clock and roast beef at seven to the legendary suburban alpha male of yore allowed most of one's day to be fairly flexible. As for today's poorer husbands, many of them are likely too tired from their job's repetitious, socially invisible physical tasks—such as makin' kahpies!—to continually oppress their wives.

But surely women's economic independence is worth it? Oy. Wrong again. Here Gilbert launches into an exhaustive and rather depressing analysis of how far we've come since the 1970s. It's a long way, baby ... if chiefly in terms of the accessibility of appliances. Seventies luxuries—air conditioners and clothes dryers—are of course the new millennium's necessities. Although more than half of all households were hanging their clothes on a line or schlepping them to a laundromat in 1971, for instance, by

2001, the majority of even poor households owned dryers. And now we all require goodies like cell phones and 900 channels of cable unheard-of 30 years ago—by 2001, eight out of 10 low-income households owned VCRs/DVD players. No question, getting moms a paycheck has been very good for the U.S. consumer-electronics market, not to mention fast-food vendors, child-care providers, and—despite all those clothes dryers—the dry-cleaning industry.

However, while the economy benefits, for working-class families with young children, so much of a second income is eaten up by child care and taxes and other costs related to holding down a job that, after purchasing the microwave—now necessary to produce hot meals in the 10 minutes left for food preparation—and the de rigueur DVD player, the second wage earner might as well have stayed at home. Gilbert concludes, then, that financial need is not the force behind women's shift in the past 50 years from work in the home to work in the marketplace; rather, it is the desires of those who have made out like bandits in this new order, the tiny minority (3.5 percent in 2003) of women who earn \$75,000 or more. Members of this occupational elite have created a host of cultural norms by which their far less privileged sisters—who, again, make up the vast majority of working women—feel they must abide. For Hirshman's doctors, lawyers, judges, and professors, work has been terrific, so it's no wonder they've advocated social change, imposing on society between the 1960s and the mid-1990s "new expectations about modern life, self-fulfillment, and the joys of work outside the home."

They've gotten results: fathers in the U.S. now spend more time with their children and do more of the household tasks than their counterparts did, and Congress and employers both have made market-friendly provisions, such as parental leave, designed to encourage mothers of young children to take up paid employment. The society that has emerged, in which equality between men and women supersedes equality between

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social classes, may therefore be seen as "the triumph of feminism over socialism." Never mind the social costs, we now have an army of consumers and a vast labor pool—what could be more market-friendly? Indeed, since the late 1990s, so-called family-friendly policies in Europe have been, as the Oxford sociologist Jane Lewis observes, "explicitly linked to the promotion of women's employment in order to further the economic growth and competition agenda." Women have achieved the freedom to join men on a more or less equal footing in the marketplace, which strengthens the notion that the only thing ultimately of value is one's

One hates to be Mrs. Red-State Republican Bringdown, but yes ... the taxes. Currently, the top marginal income-tax rate in Sweden is nearly 60 percent (down from its peak in 1979 of 87 percent). Government spending amounts to more than half of Sweden's GDP. (And it doesn't all go to children, given Sweden's low fertility rate.) On the upside, government spending creates jobs: from 1970 to 1990, a whopping 75 percent of Swedish jobs created were in the public sector ... providing social welfare services ... almost all of which were filled by women. Uh-oh. In short, as Gilbert points out, because of the 40 percent tax rate on her husband's

We all fantasize about work that occurs in an attractively lit setting with fascinating people—you know, like Oprah's job.

ability to turn a buck. The triumph of feminism, Gilbert reminds us (echoing those socially conservative men of the left, George Orwell and Christopher Lasch), has served the culture of capitalism. As he sums up the whole darn tangle:

The capitalist ethos underrates the economic value and social utility of domestic labor in family life, particularly during the early years of childhood; the prevailing expectations of gender feminists place too high a value on the social and psychological satisfactions of work; and the typical package of family-friendly benefits delivered by the state creates incentives that essentially reinforce the devaluations of motherhood prompted by the capitalist ethos and feminist expectations.

All of which brings us, finally, to Sweden. (And doesn't a shot of raspberry Absolut sound good at this point?) The debate about mothers and work: it always ends—doesn't it?—with Sweden. Oh, if America could only be like Sweden—such a humane society, with its free day care for working mothers and its government subsidies of up to \$11,900 per child per year. The problem?

job, a new mother may be forced to take that second, highly taxed job to supplement the family's finances; in other words, she leaves her toddlers behind from eight to five (in that convenient universal day care) so she can go take care of other people's toddlers or empty the bedpans of elderly strangers. (As Alan Wolfe has pointed out, "the Scandinavian welfare states which express so well a sense of obligation to distant strangers, are beginning to make it more difficult to express a sense of obligation to those with whom one shares family ties.")

I'm pretty sure that changing diapers of all sizes isn't the kind of women's work Betty Friedan had in mind, nor Linda Hirshman. The bottom line (and this fact will become more so as humans live longer): there's a whole lot of caregivin' goin' on. We all fantasize about work that uses our creativity, is self-directed, happens during the hours we choose, and occurs in an attractively lit setting with fascinating people—you know, jobs like women have on TV. Oprah's job! However, since in reality—even in Sweden—so many roads lead to a wet wipe, I myself feel grateful and lucky to be here in California while I type this essay ... which I am

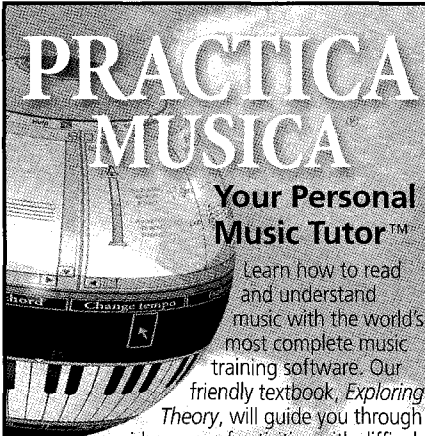
actually doing in bed, clad in my sweat-pants rather than in high heels and a bustier (as, fortunately, I am not a fantasy character on television—not unless they did a *Sex and the City* “lumberjack” edition). Later, I will feed the cats for my single, working-gal neighbor, who has a real office schedule, complete with commute. Perhaps I’ll also fling Popsicles at my latchkey children in the next room, mesmerized by a Princess video. (How much money have I earned while running Princess videos? I should pay Disney! Well, maybe not.)

Work ... family—I’m doing it all. But here’s the secret I share with so many other nanny- and housekeeper-less mothers I see working the same balance: my house is trashed. It is strewn with socks and tutus. My minivan is awash in paper wrappers (I can’t lie—several are evidence of our visits to McDonald’s Playland, otherwise known as “my second office”). My girls went to school today in the T-shirts they slept in. But so what? My children and I spend 70 hours a week of high-to-poor quality time together. We enjoy ourselves. As that NPR-listening, tree-climbing mother said: “We read, we talk, we laugh. Life is good. I never dust.” Perhaps our generation of mothers can at least offer an innovation that the early radical feminists never had. I think of Linda Hirshman approvingly quoting Pat Mainardi’s angry political analysis of the hidden tally of unrewarded “women’s” housework:

Here’s my list of dirty chores: buying groceries, carting them home and putting them away; cooking meals and washing dishes and pots; doing the laundry; digging out the place when things get out of control; washing floors. The list could go on but the sheer necessities are bad enough.

Wait ... she washed the floor?! Time to redefine “necessities,” Pat. Say what you will about them, those radical feminists were tidy housekeepers. What I’d say to them over a distance of 30 years is (*Ching!* There’s the microwave!) ... you *can* have it all—if you run your house like a man. **A**

Sandra Tsing Loh’s new book, *Mother on Fire*, will be published in August by Crown.



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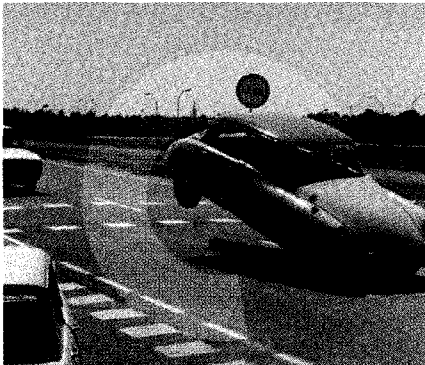
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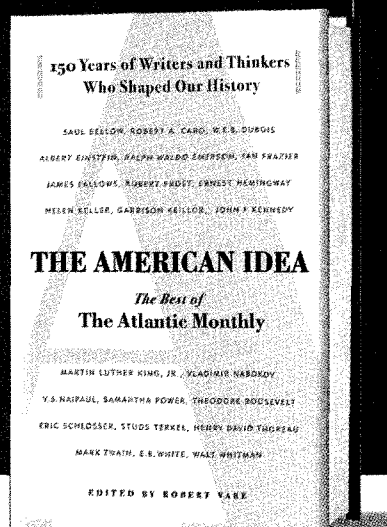
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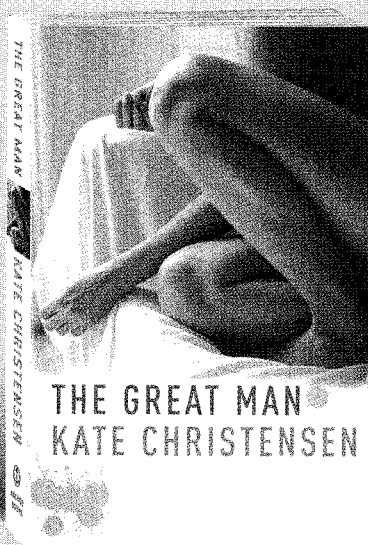
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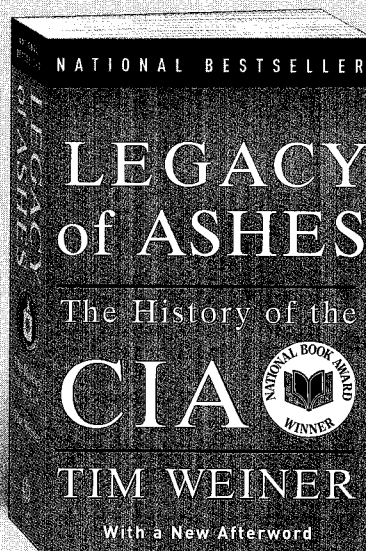


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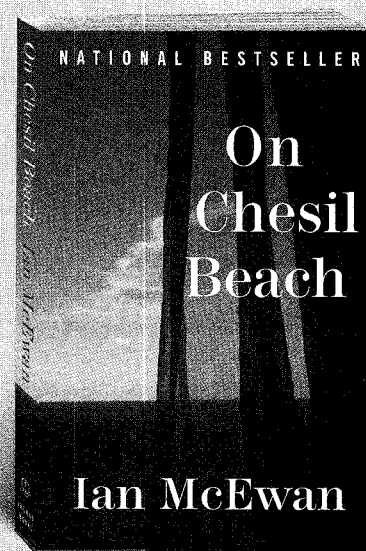
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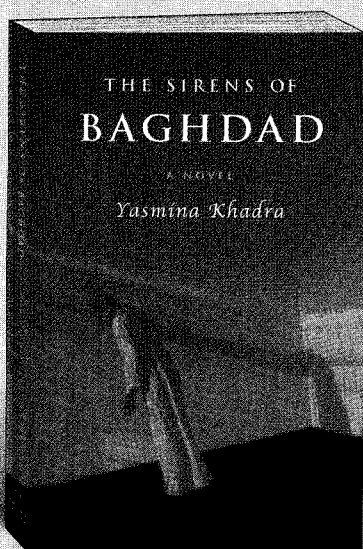
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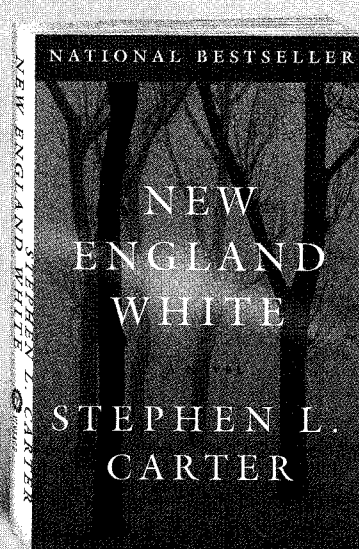
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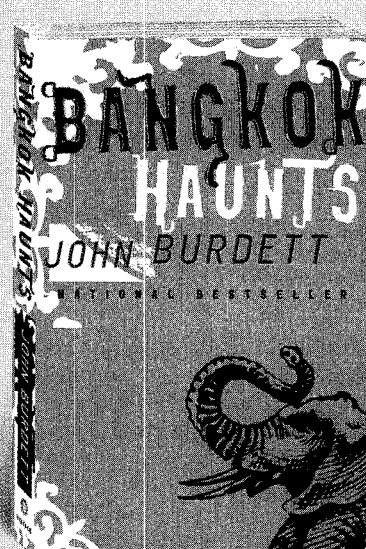
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BOOKS

Salman Rushdie's ebullient historical novel manifests both his dexterous erudition and his bawdy wit.

Cassocks and Codpieces

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

Salman Rushdie is so much identified with seriousness—his choice of subjects, from Kashmir to Andalusia; his position as a literary negotiator of East and West; his decade and more of internal exile in hiding from the edict of a fanatical theocrat—that it can be easy to forget how humorous he is. In much the same way, his extraordinary knowledge of classical literature sometimes causes people to overlook his command of the vernacular. Here are two examples of wit and idiom from his latest fiction, *The Enchantress of Florence*. In the first, an enigmatic wanderer, appareled in a coat of many colors, enters a splendid city:

Not far from the caravanserai, a tower studded with elephant tusks marked the way to the palace gate. All elephants belonged to the emperor, and by spiking a tower with their teeth he was demonstrating his power.

Beware! the tower said. You are entering the realm of the Elephant King, a sovereign so rich in pachyderms that he can waste the gnashers of a thousand of the beasts just to decorate me.

This is the offbeat manner in which one might start a tale for children, as Rushdie did in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. By contrast, here is Ago Vespucci in Florence, trying by strenuous exercise in a whorehouse to cure his revulsion at the entry of the king of France to the city.

On the threshold of manhood Ago had agreed with his friend Niccolò "il Machia" on one thing: whatever hardships the times might bring, a good, energetic night with the ladies would put everything right. "There are few woes in the world, dear Ago," il Machia had advised him when they were still only thirteen, "that a woman's

fanny will not cure." Ago was an earnest boy, good-hearted beneath his pose of a foul-mouthed rascal. "And the ladies," he asked, "where do they go to cure their woes?" Il Machia looked perplexed, as if he had never considered the matter, or, perhaps, as if to indicate that a man's time should not be wasted on the consideration of such things. "To each other, no doubt," he said with an adolescent finality that sounded to Ago like the last word on the matter. Why should women not seek consolation in each other's arms at a time when half the young men of Florence did the same thing?

The first extract introduces us to the court of Akbar, Mughal emperor of India. *Akbar* of course means "great," as Rushdie reminds us with one of many plays on words. As the emperor decapitates a foe "with a cry—*Allahu Akbar*, God is great, or, just possibly, Akbar is God," he

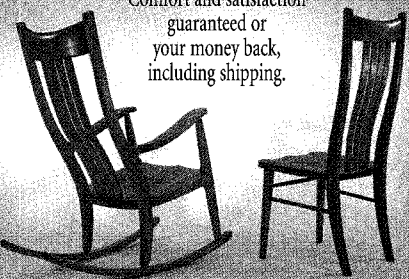
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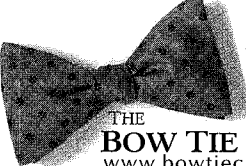
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begins to register a terrible melancholy that in turn leads him to try to establish a just city where philosophers will set the tone.

In counterpoint, the second extract takes us to the novel's other chief setting, which is Florence in the age of the Medici. Here we find three friends, Antonino "Nino" Argalia, Niccolò "il Machia" Machiavelli, and Ago Vespucci. Here also, amid countless feuds and intrigues, the idea of a politics advised by thinkers is struggling to take shape. But in both places, politics is much more than government, and Rushdie introduces a number of magical and less quantifiable—one might say more enchanting—factors that can also be said to constitute earthly powers. One of these is water, to which all potentates and serfs are in the end equally subservient. Another is beauty: those nasal elements of Cleopatra's or facial features of Helen's that can set armies on the march in their own right.

Is power the only justification for an extrovert personality? the traveler asked himself, and could not answer, but found himself hoping that beauty might be another such excuse, for he was certainly beautiful, and knew that his looks had a power of their own.

"The whole world obeys the rule of beauty," as Rushdie phrased it in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, but it's fair to say that the above is the last time in this novel that male pulchritude gets much of a look-in. Not for nothing, in other words, is the book titled for an enchantress. In long passages both bawdy and fantastic, we are shown how the feminine principle makes nonsense of all forms of statecraft, including even the cleverest ones adumbrated in *The Prince*, and how the distance between the boudoir and the bordello or zenana or harem is disconcertingly short. In a deft reengineering of the Scheherazade legend, Rushdie makes several of his femmes fatales into conjured or perhaps better say incanted figures: seductresses of the imagination who nonetheless exert tremendous

power in the "real" world; women of mystical and mythical authority who are projected along the song lines. When the fantasized Princess Qara Kōz, who even comes accompanied by an only slightly less bewitching body double, disembarks at Genoa, the toughest admiral of them all is unmanned and Andrea Doria himself "stood open-mouthed as the strangers approached, a sea-god in thrall to nymphs arising from the waters."

The almost cartoonish hyperbole here, of the sort that shows men walking into trees or walls with their tongues hanging out—the "banquet for the senses"; the "autonomy of her great beauty, which no man could own, which owned itself, and which would blow wherever it pleased, like the wind"—has compelled Rushdie to admit to some interviewers

that, yes indeed, he was writing somewhat under the influence of his recent divorce from the celebrated heartbreaker Padma Lakshmi. "What a short journey from *enchantress* to *witch*," as the narrator says and as many journalists will be eager to interpret it. But this facile reading of the novel ignores a crucial moment, when the great condottiere Argalia, who has protected the protean and fickle Qara Kōz through many hazards, comes to the realization that he has to save her from a vengeful mob and must die in the doing of it:

He did not use the word "love." For the last time in his life he wondered if he had wasted his love on a woman who only gave her love until it was time to take it back. He set the thought aside. He had given his heart this once in his life and counted himself blessed to have had the chance to do so. The question of whether she was worthy of his love had no meaning. His heart had answered that question long ago.

So, after all the lurid brothel scenes and interludes of lust and obscenity, where it appears for long stretches as if the world is ruled by crude sexual urgency and its power-related sublimations, we find a shining illustration of the precept of *Amor Vincit Omnia*. Except,

of course, that while love itself may win in the long run, the actual lovers are often betrayed or killed. But then, is this not the very essence of romance?

This is a historical romance to boot, taking in epic sweeps of warfare and conquest and murder and torture, as well as dynastic rivalries and intense struggles over the interpretation of scripture. It veers somewhere between *Salammbô* and *Romola*. From the Mughal and Medici lands, it detours to take in the Ottoman and Persian empires and the blood-soaked Walachia of Vlad the Impaler. A six-page bibliography at the conclusion directs the interested reader to the work of Ariosto, of Sir Richard Burton, and of Godfrey Goodwin on the Janissaries, as well as to articles in learned journals on such subjects as "Sorcery in Early Renaissance Florence." The erudition is dexterously deployed, with a heartening leaven of demotic obscenity. "It's your curse to see the world too fucking clearly," Niccolò Machiavelli is at one point informed by a candid friend, "and without a shred of kindness, and then you can't keep it to yourself, you just have to spit it out, and to hell with people's feelings. Why don't you go and masturbate a diseased goat."

It is the figure of Akbar, however, that is the summa of the novel's accomplishment. Moody and wise and ironic, he takes on the great imposture of religion and, as emperors should, ponders whether or not it possesses any clothes:

Maybe there was no true religion. Yes, he had allowed himself to think this. He wanted to be able to tell someone of his suspicion that men had made their gods and not the other way around. He wanted to be able to say, it is man at the center of things, not god.

Elsewhere, and with admirable understatement, Akbar objects to the divinity on the mildly stated but massively heretical grounds "that his existence deprived human beings of the right to form ethical structures by themselves." The contrast between him and Shah Ismail of Persia—"the self-appointed

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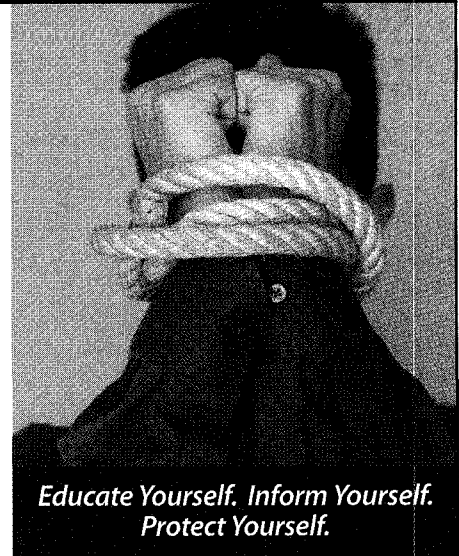
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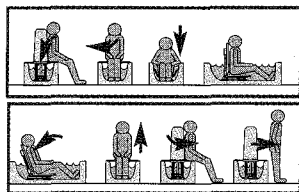
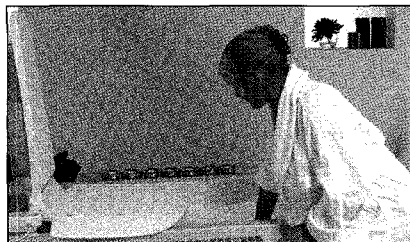
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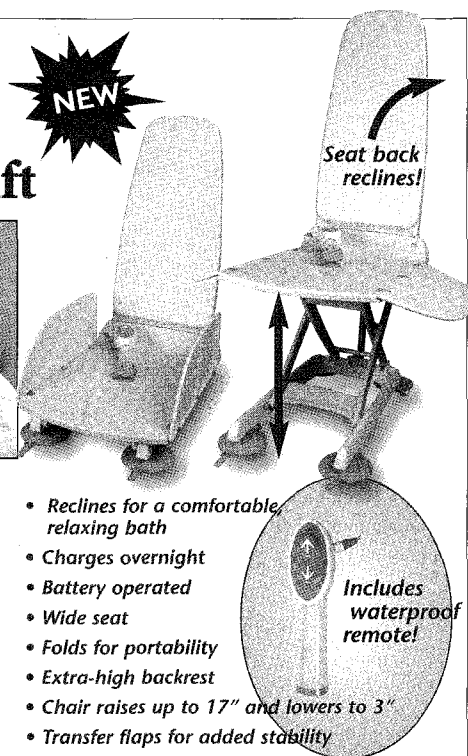
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representative on earth of the Twelfth Imam"—could hardly be more pointed. In the person of a man who was "by repute arrogant, egotistical, and a fanatic proselytizer of *Ithna Ashari*, that is to say Twelver Shiite Islam," a man who calls himself "*Vali Allah*, the vicar of God ... Modesty, generosity, kindness: these were not his most renowned characteristics," it is perhaps not fanciful to discern the outline of a prototype Khomeini.

In Florence, too, the hell-on-earth created by priestcraft is coarsely and pungently denounced: young Vespucci capers happily around the pyre on the day that Savonarola is burned and the reign of clerical puritan terror brought to a close.

"The Devil sent us these devils to warn us against devilry," he said on the day the long darkness came to an end. "And they bedeviled us for four fucking years. The cassock of holiness cloaks the codpiece of evil, every fucking time."

In the result, the worlds of illusion and enchantment seem to collapse in upon themselves, leaving a rich compost of legend and myth for successor generations. In a stern reminder and recognition of the watery yet material substratum of existence, the River Arno betrays Florence by going dry for a year and a day, and a similar lethal aridity causes the crumbling of Akbar's great and noble city at Fatehpur Sikri. In which direction can the parched imagination now turn? A clue may seem to lie in the first name of another young Vespucci of Florence: the "Amerigo" who gave a vague yet unforgettable title to the concept of a new world. Even the hypnotizing Qara Kōz, approaching the exhaustion of her magic reign, feels the pull from the West: "She reacted to the new place names as if she were hearing an incantation, a charm that could bring her her heart's desire. She wanted to hear more, more." That was just how Scheherazade tried to leave her one-man audience, in another proof of where real power resides. ▀

Christopher Hitchens is an *Atlantic* contributing editor and a *Vanity Fair* columnist.

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About Your Professor

Dr. Bart D. Ehrman is the James A. Gray Professor and Chair of the Department of Religious Studies at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He received his Masters of Divinity and Ph.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary. He has won several teaching awards, including the Students' Undergraduate Teaching Award and the Bowman and Gordon Gray Award for Excellence in Teaching. Professor Ehrman has written or edited more than 15 books, including *The New York Times* best-seller, *Misquoting Jesus*, and *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium*.

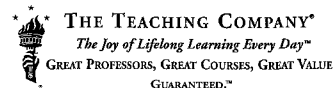
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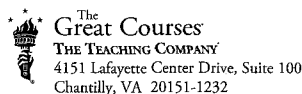
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BOOKS

A guide to additional releases

COVER to COVER

BIOGRAPHY and MEMOIR



Julie Andrews: An Intimate Biography

by Richard Stirling (St. Martin's)

Home: A Memoir of My Early Years

by Julie Andrews (Hyperion)

Several adjectives aptly describe Stirling's biography—*tactful, judicious, informative*—but *intimate* is decidedly not one of them. The book's value lies in its full account of its subject's work on stage and screen, rather than in its report of her personal life. We do learn that she embraced psychoanalysis before her marriage to the equally enthralled director Blake Edwards, and that actually they met coming to and from their mutual psychoanalyst. For a measure of what all that time on the couch wrought, Andrews's memoir, beautifully told in a remarkably natural, authentic voice, is the place to go. Revisiting a childhood filled with pressures and trials of all sorts, with too much stage-door parenting and too little of the more supportive variety, the mature woman, liberated to tell her tale, reveals herself at last, like Chaucer's Criseyde, truly "myne owene woman, wel at ese."

Relish: The Extraordinary Life of Alexis Soyer, Victorian Celebrity Chef

by Ruth Cowen (Trafalgar Square)

Many great French chefs have conquered England and become culinary celebrities, but Alexis Soyer stands alone. Unlike Escoffier, he didn't just come and cook in great hotels. Forever associated with the London club where his classic, eponymous dish, Lamb Cutlets Reform, is still on the menu, Soyer cut a swath wide and deep through Victorian society. Everyone who was anyone, from Disraeli to Dickens, ate his food in grand houses and at banquets, but he also licensed Crosse & Blackwell to market his sauces and rel-

ishes for wider consumption. He fed the starving from a soup kitchen during the Irish potato famine of the 1840s and, a decade later, revamped army food in the Crimean War. His personal story is a roller coaster of fortunes made and lost, his ending ignominious. *Relish* tells it all with verve and conviction, although anyone who has actually tried Lamb Cutlets Reform will realize how tastes have evolved in the time since Soyer ruled.

Woman of Rome:

A Life of Elsa Morante

by Lily Tuck (HarperCollins)

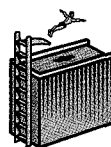
Equal parts literary biography and liberation tract, this engaging volume—the first nonfiction foray by the acclaimed novelist Tuck—elegantly achieves its dual aims. Informed by her own early experiences in Italy's capital, the author traces an unconventional life and a volatile spirit, from Morante's modest beginnings to her self-willed work to her flight from Fascists to her tempestuous marriage (to fellow writer Alberto Moravia, with whom she enjoyed "Sartre/Beauvoir of Italy" status and ran in similarly heady boho circles—think Bertolucci, Visconti, Pasolini, Calvino, Levi, et al.). After that come prize-winning tomes (*Arturo's Island*, *History*), and an oddball exhumation, among other surprises. Though Tuck's style is crisp and her tone cool, she takes the measure of Morante's controversial writing with care and compassion. Rarely have subject and biographer been so aptly matched.

FICTION

Olive Kitteridge

by Elizabeth Strout (Random House)

In this superb "novel in stories," at once poignant and hopeful, Strout has hit upon a form that highlights her considerable



skill at revealing a character by coming at her from every angle. Only a few of these stories, set in a coastal Maine town, center on Olive Kitteridge, who is flinty, tactless, defensive, more honest with others than with herself—in other words, strikingly believable—but she appears at least peripherally in each of them, underscoring the idea that one person can play myriad, sometimes surprising roles within her circle of acquaintance. As Strout explores relationships between parents and children, and lovers young, old, illicit, and married, she's particularly adept at showing the complex coincidence of tenderness and fury, appreciation and disappointment that exists between those who are closely tied. And ultimately, by eschewing sentimentality in favor of clear-eyed understanding, she renders her prickly character sympathetic.

HISTORY



The Force of Destiny:

A History of Italy Since 1796

by Christopher Duggan (Houghton Mifflin)

The story of how an Italian-speaking region of Europe moved from a patchwork quilt of states and foreign-occupied territories into a true nation usually begins with Garibaldi, Cavour, and the mid-19th-century Risorgimento, or national resurgence. This absorbing study, however, traces the beginnings of that progression to the forces unleashed by the Napoleonic incursions into the Italian Peninsula. Duggan takes his title from Verdi's opera, and it suits his book perfectly, because of the dramatic tale he unfolds as well as his attention to the crucial role played by cultural forces in the evolution of Italy as a nation-state. This is the story of how Italy came to be; it's also the scarcely less colorful story of its monarchy and descent into Fascism and (eventually) its turbulent but nonetheless enduring democracy.

Duggan concludes with a disquieting look at the forces that threaten to pull the still-fragile nation apart in the 21st century.

A Summer of Hummingbirds

by Christopher Benfey (Penguin Press)

For the past quarter century, readers have been learning through myriad accounts about the frenetic whirl of sexual activity that surrounded—and even occasionally took place within—the hothouse world of Emily Dickinson. A professor of English at Dickinson's alma mater, Mount Holyoke College, Benfey knows this terrain—geographical as well as atmospheric—and visits it anew. In addition, through a series of concentric circles and connections of various kinds, he draws in well-known figures from the wider world, including Henry Ward Beecher and Mark Twain. But his unique contribution is finding a unifying force in the cult of the hummingbird, an evocative image of daring and freedom in a restrictive time. In so doing, he brings a fresh perspective to this too-often overheated topic, providing new contexts, insights, and depth.

The Red Prince: The Secret Lives of a Habsburg Archduke

by Timothy Snyder (*Basic*)

In the 20th century, as Europe's dynasties disappeared and the Continent's maps were constantly in flux following wars large and small, some princes saw opportunities. Few aspirations could have been as quixotic as Archduke Wilhelm von Habsburg's hankering to rule over Ukraine, parts of which had been on the fringes of his family's Austro-Hungarian Empire. Yet the Yale historian Timothy Snyder is so knowledgeable about the interstices of central and eastern European history and culture that he makes this story a plausible historical "might have been." Predictably, Wilhelm's highly individualistic quest broke on the rocks of conflicting nationalisms and ideologies, and his end was disastrous. In 1948, he died in the land he longed to rule, shortly after beginning a 25-year sentence in a Soviet prison there, for, among other things, "aspiring to be king of Ukraine in 1918." This prince may have been Red for a Habsburg, but he wasn't Red enough for Comrade Stalin.

SOCIETY
and **CULTURE**



**Mustang: The Saga of
the Wild Horse in the American West**
by Deanne Stillman (Houghton Mifflin)

Though inextricably bound to America and the American Way, mustangs—the wild horses that “blazed our trails, fought our wars, served as our most loyal partners”—have been alternately brutalized and brushed aside by those to whom they’re most bound. That’s the premise put forth by Stillman, author of the well-regarded *Twentynine Palms*, who, after learning of the sadistic December 1998 slaughter of 34 wild horses outside Reno by two marines and a third perpetrator, was spurred to action: “The horse deserved its own account,” she argues, “through the entire American saga.” The result is a tale so brisk, smart, thorough, and surprising—Jewish conquistadors, Nixon-as-protectionist, the true origin of the horse revealed (!)—that any overly ardent equine-patriotic pronouncements (“the ever-defiant mustang that is our true representative, coursing through our blood as he carries the eternal message of America”) are happily forgiven.

Claim of Privilege

by Barry Siegel (HarperCollins)

There's something distinctly (and thankfully) old-fashioned in the literary journalism practiced by Siegel, a Pulitzer Prize-winning former *Los Angeles Times* correspondent and current University of California at Irvine professor. In his latest title, he turns his gimlet eye on a 60-year-old imbroglia: the 1948 crash of a B-29 Superfortress that killed three civilian engineers, the 1949 lawsuit brought by their respective widows, the Air Force cover-up that ensued, and the landmark 1953 Supreme Court ruling (*U.S. v. Reynolds*) that established the state-secrets privilege, used ever since for all manner of governmental prerogatives, from document concealment to "enemy combatant" detention to civil-liberties erosion. Siegel here employs all his estimable powers—deep reportage, meticulous methodology, shrewd analysis—in pursuit of the story, establishing in the process an incontrovertible legal continuum from the early Cold War era to the post-9/11 one. The result is revelatory.

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DEFINITION**

sleuth / sliddery
2 verb intrns. Act as a detective; conduct an investigation. Also foll. by around, etc.
Constr: sleuth+ing: see sense A3 above. **sleuth-bound** (tech)
Said of something a broadcaster, finishing an investigation, a teacher, a detective.

[sleuth] noun: var. of storm noun.
[sleuth] verb trans. OE-17c.
[Old English *sleutan*, Cf. *slave* verb.]
Cause to slip (in, on, over, etc.).

slews /slu:/ noun: Also sleught, sloue, etc.
[Alt. of *swallow* noun.]
1. A marshy or rocky pool, pond, inlet, etc. N. Amer.
2. gen. An expanse or mass of water, rare, etc.

slow /slu:/ noun, also sloue, etc.
[From *slaw* verb, meaning, or causing to turn
The action of turning, or causing the position
change of place; a turn, a twist; the position
thing has been turned.
Constr: *slow rate*= *slowing rate* s.v. *slowing*.
slowing noun, *slowing* chiefly N. Amer. *slow*
number or quantity of
The new crop of

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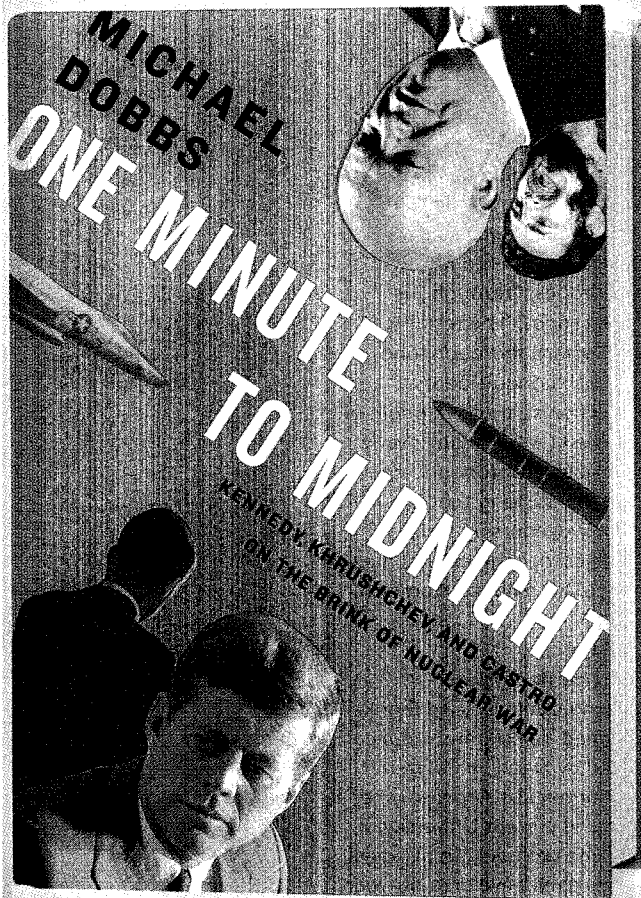
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TRAVELS

A rare Frank Lloyd Wright tower—one of his most bizarre buildings ever—rises high above the Oklahoma plains.

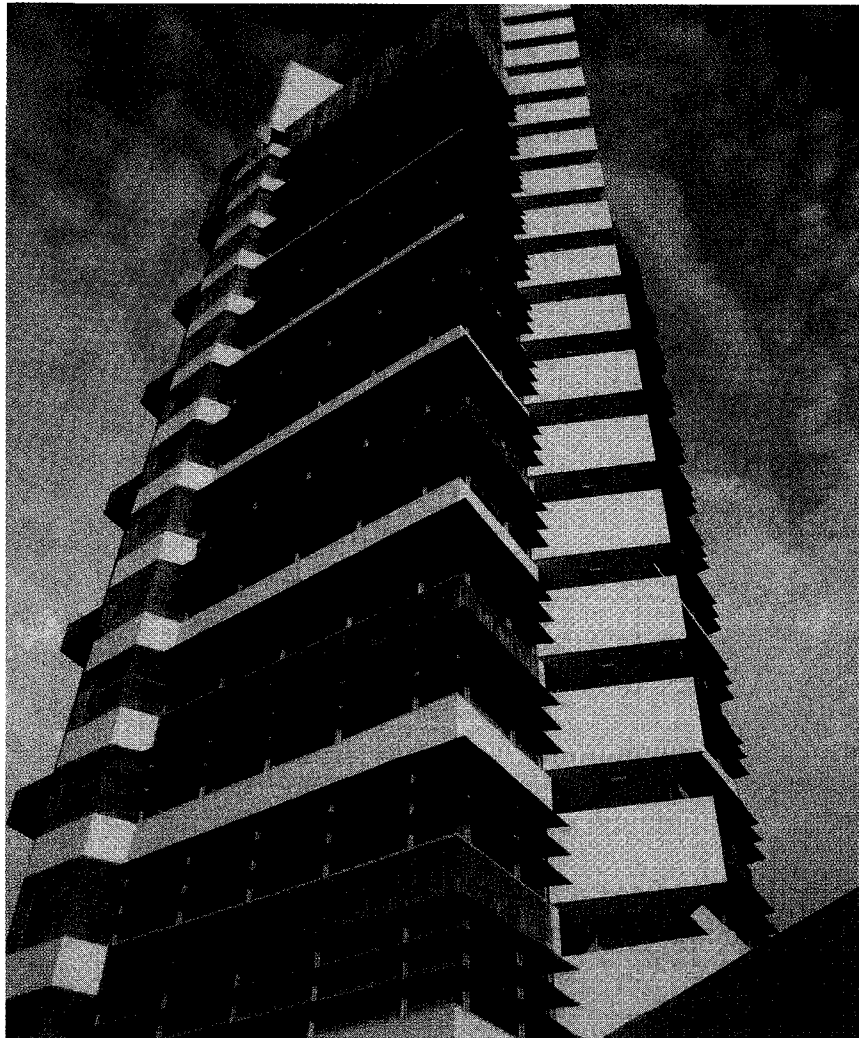
Little Skyscraper on the Prairie

BY WAYNE CURTIS

In 1952, an Oklahoma businessman named Harold Price met with the 85-year-old architect Frank Lloyd Wright to ask him to design a headquarters for his pipeline company in Bartlesville. Wright agreed. Price told Wright he wanted a three-story building and was willing to spend \$750,000. Wright suggested a 10-story tower ("Modern elevators and all that," he explained). In the end, as Price later wrote, "we finally compromised on nineteen floors." Price Tower, completed in 1956, cost \$2.1 million.

This monument to Wright's supernatural powers of persuasion still stands in a quiet corner of Bartlesville, a city of 35,000. It's easily one of the more bizarre towers ever built. Wright, who is best known for his low Prairie-style buildings, had a complicated relationship with tall buildings, calling one an "incongruous mantrap of monstrous dimensions." Yet late in life he created drawings for a 528-story skyscraper featuring atomic-powered elevators with five cabs strung vertically in each shaft. (It was never built.) Price Tower is the tallest building Wright constructed, and it's every bit as startling rising out of the low Oklahoma hills as his corkscrewy Guggenheim Museum is crouched in the canyons of Manhattan.

I first saw Price Tower 10 years ago, when passing through Bartlesville on a cross-country road trip. It was a quiet Sunday morning in early summer, and long, poisonous rays of sunlight stabbed across the landscape. The light was so sharp and the city so empty, I might have been wandering through an architectural model; I half expected to see little trees made of lichens, and faceless Giammetti couples frozen in mid-stride.



I walked around the tower twice and discovered that as you move, it subtly shifts in appearance, like one of those holograms that winks at you. From this side, it looked like a sleek sculpture inlaid with turquoise; from that, a complicated proof of a geometric theorem, or maybe a comb. Pressing my face against the glass at the front door left me intrigued but unenlightened.

A few years ago, I read that the tower had been donated by its most recent owner, the Phillips Petroleum Company, to a nonprofit arts organization, which had converted it into a boutique hotel.

MORE ON THEATLANTIC.COM
For a slideshow of Frank Lloyd Wright's Price Tower, narrated by Wayne Curtis, visit www.theatlantic.com/multimedia.



WRIGHT DESIGNED FURNITURE for Price Tower, now on display in the ground-floor arts center.

THE TRAVEL ADVISORY

Bartlesville is about an hour's drive north of the Tulsa International Airport. Tulsa has an excellent collection of Art Deco and Streamline Moderne buildings worth lingering for, if you're an architecture buff. **The Tulsa Foundation for Architecture** (www.tulsaarchitecture.com; 918-583-5550) offers a brochure and laminated map.

Inn at Price Tower (www.innatpricetower.com; 918-336-1000) has 19 rooms; prices start at \$145 for a double. Tours of the tower are offered Tuesday through Sunday. The arts center, on the ground floor, has several permanent exhibitions, including an elaborate architectural model of the tower and a collection of Wright-designed office furniture.

Forty-five minutes west of town is the Nature Conservancy's vast **Tallgrass Prairie Preserve**, the largest such protected tract in the world. You can drive its 40 miles of gravel roads while remaining alert for some of the 2,500 free-roaming bison.

Bartlesville grew to prominence in the early 20th century, when Frank Phillips and others tapped into the tremendous reserves of oil thereabouts. Much of the oil money stayed local, and Oklahoma's gilded age can be

seen in the neoclassical **Frank Phillips Home** (www.frankphillipshome.org; 918-336-2491) and in Phillips's haute-Western ranch house, **Woolaroc**, a rustic 1925 lodge 12 miles southwest of Bartlesville, with nearly 100 mounted heads of game on the walls (www.woolaroc.org; 918-336-0307).

More about the Phillips family and their enterprises can be found in the bright, airy, and surprisingly extensive **Phillips 66 Museum**, located downtown at 410 South Keeler Avenue. Architecture fans will like the exhibit depicting the evolution of the prototype gas station, from faux-Cotswold cottage to mid-century batwing (www.phillips66museum.com; 918-661-8687).

Among the early residents of Price Tower was Bruce Goff, an impossible-to-categorize architect who practiced from the 1920s into the 1960s, in styles ranging from Art Deco to intergalactic. A number of his striking homes are in and around Bartlesville, though none are open to the public. However, you can stop inside the education building of his **Redeemer Lutheran Church**, built partly with blue-green cullet glass, and you can find a compendium of his other buildings at www.brucegoffbartlesville.blogspot.com.

with 19 guest rooms and suites on eight floors, along with an arts center on the ground floor, offices on several other floors, and a restaurant and bar. I resolved to return and spend a few days getting to know Bartlesville—and Wright—a little better. In March, I finally did.

Wright tended to compose structures based on one geometric shape or another. For Price Tower, he chose the triangle. He liked the triangle, he wrote, "because it allows flexibility of arrangement for human movement not afforded by the rectangle." This statement, like much of the architect's writing, recedes further from comprehension the longer one considers it. Nevertheless, each floor has a curious pinwheel-like geometry, and the light fixtures, stairways, and carport pillars are assembled of acute angles. Even the storm drains in the parking lot are three-sided.

I took an hour-long tour of the building, to get a better sense of what Wright had wrought. It began with a short film featuring home-movie footage of Wright wandering about looking proprietary. I learned about how the tower was built, and that Wright's taste in clothing ran toward capes and other extravagant haberdashery.

Although the building went up in the 1950s, it feels like a time capsule from an earlier era. That's because it was by and large recycled from Wright's 1929 plan for a series of never-built towers in New York City. The design is radical for reasons unrelated to triangles. The central metaphor is a tree. (Wright liked to describe the tower as "the tree that escaped the crowded forest.") A stout central service core is the trunk. The branches—reinforced concrete floors—are cantilevered off it, allowing the floors to taper to as little as three inches thick. Because the outer walls needed no weight-bearing columns, Wright could do what he wanted on the exterior. And what he wanted was to line it with copper panels embossed with geometric shapes of his own devising, bands of windows, and angled copper fins that, like leaves, shaded the rooms from direct sun.

Most floors contained three offices plus half a duplex apartment. Wright's idea was that Price's workers could live on one floor and commute to another. (None, in fact, did.) It's an odd notion for Bartlesville, where one can bike in three minutes from a leafy residential neighborhood to downtown, and it also struck me as a bit impractical—boiled cabbage in Apartment 7A would not, I'd wager, make for happy workers in Office Suite 7B.

But the chief impression I took away was that the tower isn't a cerebral geometry project, but a space almost perfectly scaled for human occupation. The rooms and corridors fit me like a comfortable pair of jeans—and I'm more of a rectangle than a triangle. The flourishes, including etched concrete floors and embossed copper panels that continue inside, conveyed low-key charm rather than grandeur.

Among my favorite spaces was the 19th-floor office—Price's private redoubt, and one of the most eccentric and lovely offices I've seen anywhere. (The tower was really "eighteen floors to hold up my father's office," Price's son Joe once said.) A five-sided desk sits under a double-height ceiling, and there's a private terrace, a grand wall of triangle-patterned stained glass, and soaring views of the sky. There was nothing in the least monstrous or mantrappy about it.

Wright was famous for architectural sleights of hand. One was to funnel visitors through a low, narrow hallway in order to make the room they were entering feel larger. It's simple and effective, and I've always enjoyed being duped when touring other Wright buildings. But here not so much, since he took the same approach with four tiny elevators, whose cabs are irregular hexagons. During one solo descent, the door opened and a man holding a suitcase peered in. He said, "That's OK, I'll catch the next one." I didn't blame him; it would have been like sharing a shower stall. The posted capacity is 1,500 pounds, which I have to assume was a sly joke on the part of an elevator engineer.

My guest room, on the seventh floor, was a converted office, and it displayed

a powerful aversion to right angles, most notably in the trapezoidal shower. The modern guest rooms were designed by the New York architect Wendy Evans Joseph, who said that she didn't want "Fake Lloyd Wright" interiors. Instead, the rooms have that pleasingly austere, modern style common to boutique hotels, although cast in a warm glow thanks to the liberal use of copper.

The restaurant and bar, called Copper, are on the 15th and 16th floors, and they also make good use of tight spaces. The restaurant includes two open-air terraces; partly obscured by copper panels, they feel a bit like Dr. Evil's secret lairs, and make fine spots to sip wine and discuss world domination while the sun sets over the Osage Hills.

Price Tower is captivating enough that a visitor needn't ever leave the building, thereby fulfilling Wright's dream of a self-contained environment. (Shortly after I settled in, someone knocked on my door to invite me to yoga in the art gallery on Saturday morning.) But I did get out to tour the sights of Bartlesville, which include the mansions of the early oilmen. Ten minutes away is the town of Dewey, where antiques malls, like hermit crabs, occupy former storefronts. Thanks to the oil boom, Oklahoma is fertile ground for mid-century flotsam—stuff from local attics still washes up in the shops. I found a turquoise Argus slide viewer, a glass sugar bowl shaped like an orange, and a guidebook to the 1964 New York World's Fair, all for less than \$6. No souvenir shop could improve on this. I also spent part of a morning at the nearby Phillips 66 Museum, which was more engaging than I had anticipated. Among other things, I learned that hula hoops—which came about owing to a gasoline additive or a plastic resin or an extrusion technology or some combination thereof—are more complicated than you might think.

In 2003, *The New York Times* called Bartlesville an aspiring "Bilbao with chicken-fried steak." This was in reference to plans to build an elaborate new arts center at the base of Price Tower. Indeed, an addition had been commissioned

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GILLES KEPEL AND
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TRANSLATED BY PASCALE GHAZALEH

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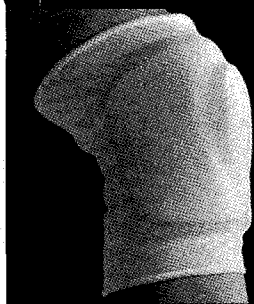
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from the internationally known architect Zaha Hadid, and a model in the center depicts a boomerang-shaped structure around the tower's base. The new center remains in the planning stage until the cash to build it can be raised.

In my room, where I spent most of my time without guilt—it's a rare and pleasing confluence when a hotel room is the actual destination—I Googled the phrase *Bilbao effect*, which is shorthand for the way avant-garde buildings can trigger an economic boom in an overlooked city. I got more than 10,000 hits. Then I Googled *Bartlesville effect*, and got zero hits. Between these data sets is no doubt a story about the changing role of architecture in economic development. Price Tower was never the centerpiece of a committee's plan to boost tourism. It was mostly a gesture of generosity, leavened with a little ego, from Harold Price to the people of Bartlesville.

The tower was mocked when it opened—it looked fussy and old-fashioned at a time when sleek glass curtain walls, like that of the UN Secretariat Building, were reshaping the American landscape. *BusinessWeek* wrote that Price's employees were "victimized by the impractical." Price, unembittered by the cost overruns, defended his tower and said that "criticism of Mr. Wright's architecture [is] based only on minor defects such as leaky windows and unbalanced chairs. There is no mention of the outstanding beauty and efficiency of the design."

And therein may be the real Bartlesville effect. I found Price Tower not only humble and beautiful but a profoundly peaceful spot, as I imagine Mr. Price did, holed up on the 19th floor. During my second night, a cacophonous thunderstorm with Art Deco-ish bolts of lightning blew in from the plains. The sky blazed and the rain came pounding down, tapping out on the copper panels a complex series of timpani rolls and drip-driven arpeggios.

It was like hiding away in a tree house Frank Lloyd Wright had built. Which, I'm guessing, was pretty much what he had in mind. ▀

Wayne Curtis is a frequent contributor to *The Atlantic*.

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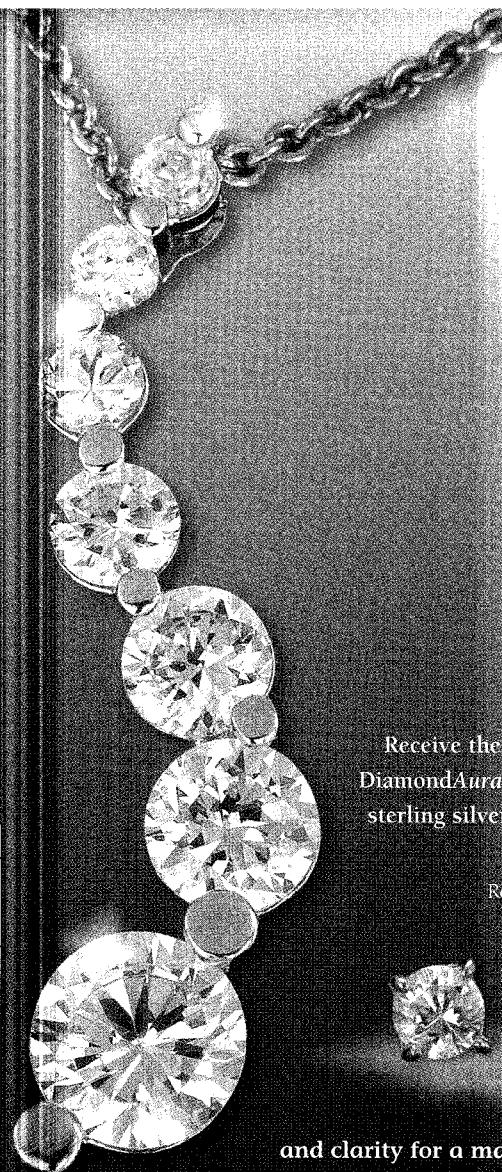
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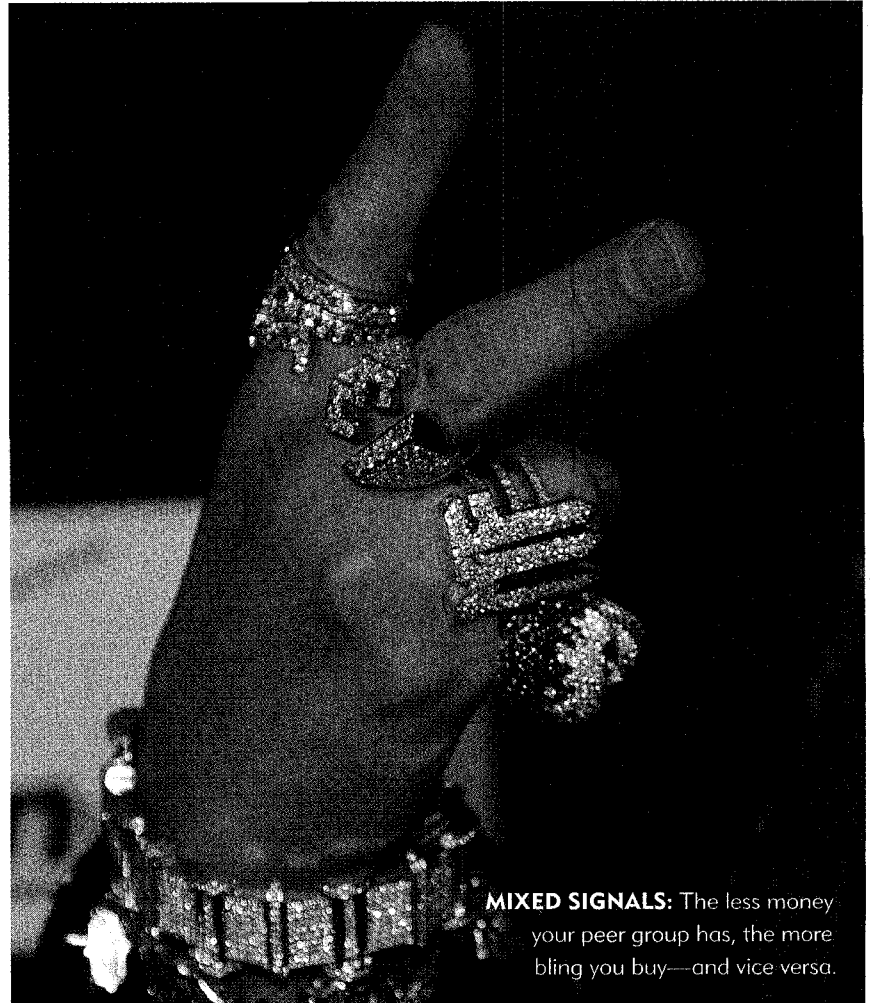
BY VIRGINIA POSTREL

About seven years ago, University of Chicago economists Kerwin Kofi Charles and Erik Hurst were researching the “wealth gap” between black and white Americans when they noticed something striking. African Americans not only had less wealth than whites with similar incomes, they also had significantly more of their assets tied up in cars. The statistic fit a stereotype reinforced by countless bling-filled hip-hop videos: that African Americans spend a lot on cars, clothes, and jewelry—highly visible goods that tell the world the owner has money.

But do they really? And, if so, why?

The two economists, along with Nikolai Roussanov of the University of Pennsylvania, have now attacked those questions. What they found not only provides insight into the economic differences between racial groups, it challenges common assumptions about luxury. Conspicuous consumption, this research suggests, is not an unambiguous signal of personal affluence. It's a sign of belonging to a relatively poor group. Visible luxury thus serves less to establish the owner's positive status as affluent than to fend off the negative perception that the owner is poor. The richer a society or peer group, the less important visible spending becomes.

On race, the folk wisdom turns out to be true. An African American family with the same income, family size, and other demographics as a white family will spend about 25 percent more of its income on jewelry, cars, personal care, and apparel. For the average black family, making about \$40,000 a year, that amounts to \$1,900 more a year than for a comparable white family. To make up the difference, African Americans spend



MIXED SIGNALS: The less money your peer group has, the more bling you buy—and vice versa.

much less on education, health care, entertainment, and home furnishings. (The same is true of Latinos.)

Of course, different ethnic groups could simply have different tastes. Maybe blacks just enjoy jewelry more than whites do. Maybe they buy costlier clothes to deter slights from racist salesclerks. Maybe they spend more on cars for historical reasons, because of the freedom auto travel gave African Americans during the days of segregated trains and buses.

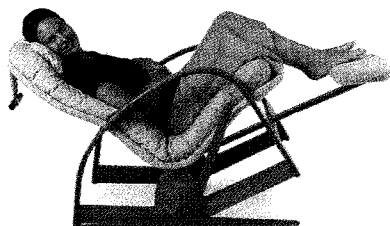
Maybe they just aren't that interested in private colleges or big-screen TVs. Or maybe not. Economists hate unfalsifiable tautologies about differing tastes. They want stories that could apply to anyone.

So the researchers went back to Thorstein Veblen, who coined the term *conspicuous consumption*. Writing in the much poorer world of 1899, Veblen argued that people spent lavishly on visible goods to prove that they were prosperous. “The motive is emulation—the

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The Atlantic emporium

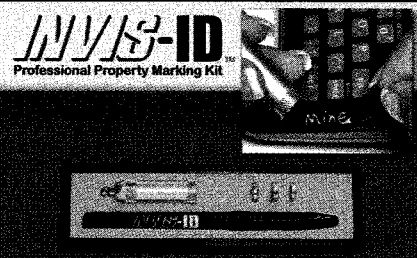
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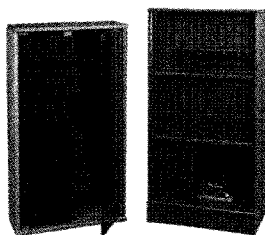
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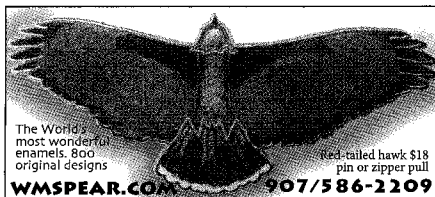
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stimulus of an invidious comparison which prompts us to outdo those with whom we are in the habit of classing ourselves," he wrote. Along these lines, the economists hypothesized that visible consumption lets individuals show strangers they aren't poor. Since strangers tend to lump people together by race, the lower your racial group's income, the more valuable it is to demonstrate your personal buying power.

To test this idea, the economists compared the spending patterns of people of the same race in different states—say, blacks in Alabama versus blacks in Massachusetts, or whites in South Carolina versus whites in California. Sure enough, all else being equal (including one's own income), an individual spent more of his income on visible goods as his racial group's income went down. African Americans don't necessarily have different tastes from whites. They're just poorer, on average. In places where blacks in general have more money, individual black people feel less pressure to prove their wealth.

The same is true for whites. Controlling for differences in housing costs, an increase of \$10,000 in the mean income for white households—about like going from South Carolina to California—leads to a 13 percent *decrease* in spending on visible goods. "Take a \$100,000-a-year person in Alabama and a \$100,000 person in Boston," says Hurst. "The \$100,000 person in Alabama does more visible consumption than the \$100,000 person in Massachusetts." That's why a diamond-crusted Rolex screams "nouveau riche." It signals that the owner came from a poor group and has something to prove.

So this research has implications beyond race. It ought to apply to any peer group perceived by strangers. It suggests why emerging economies like Russia and China, despite their low average incomes, are such hot luxury markets today—and why 20th-century Texas, a relatively poor state, provided so many eager customers for Neiman Marcus. Rich people in poor places want to show off their wealth. And their less affluent counterparts feel pressure to fake it, at least in public. Nobody

wants the stigma of being thought poor. Veblen was right.

But he was also wrong. Or at least his theory is out of date. Given that the richer your group, the less flashy spending you'll do, conspicuous consumption isn't a universal phenomenon. It's a development phase. It declines as countries, regions, or distinct groups get richer. "Bling rules in emerging economies still eager to travel the status-through-product consumption road," the market-research group Euromonitor recently noted, but luxury businesses "are becoming aware that bling isn't enough for growing numbers of consumers in developed economies." At some point, luxury becomes less a tool of public status competition and more a means to private pleasure.

In Veblen's day, the less affluent scrimped on their homes in order to keep up appearances in public. "The domestic life of most classes is relatively shabby, as compared with the éclat of that overt portion of their life that is carried on before the eyes of observers," Veblen wrote, noting that people therefore "habitually screen their private life from observation." By contrast, consider David Brooks's observation in *Bobos in Paradise* that, for today's educated elites,

it's virtuous to spend \$25,000 on your bathroom, but it's vulgar to spend \$15,000 on a sound system and a wide-screen TV. It's decadent to spend \$10,000 on an outdoor Jacuzzi, but if you're not spending twice that on an oversized slate shower stall, it's a sign that you probably haven't learned to appreciate the simple rhythms of life.

Virtuous or vulgar, what all these items have in common is that they're invisible to strangers. Only your friends and family see them. Any status they confer applies only within the small group you invite to your home. And the snob appeal Brooks pokes fun at corresponds to the size of the audience. Many friends may see your Jacuzzi or media room, but unless you're on HGTV, only intimates will tour your master bathroom. A slate shower stall may make you feel rich, but it won't tell the world that

you are. As peer groups get richer, the balance between private pleasure and publicly visible consumption shifts.

Russ Alan Prince and Lewis Schiff describe a similar pattern in their book, *The Middle-Class Millionaire*, which analyzes the spending habits of the 8.4 million American households whose wealth is self-made and whose net worth, including their home equity, is between \$1 million and \$10 million. Aside from a penchant for fancy cars, these millionaires devote their luxury dollars mostly to goods and services outsiders can't see: concierge health care, home renovations, all sorts of personal coaches, and expensive family vacations. They focus less on impressing strangers and more on family- and self-improvement. Even when they invest in traditional luxuries like second homes, jets, or yachts, they prefer fractional ownership. "They're looking for ownership to be converted into a relationship rather than an asset they have to take care of," says Schiff. Their primary luxuries are time and attention.

The shift away from conspicuous consumption—from goods to services and experiences—can also make luxury more exclusive. Anyone with \$6,000 can buy a limited-edition Bottega Veneta bag, an elaborately beaded Roberto Cavalli minidress, or a Cartier watch. Or, for the same sum, you can register for the TED conference. That \$6,000 ticket entitles you to spend four days in California hearing short talks by brainy innovators, famous (Frank Gehry, Amy Tan, Brian Greene) and not-so-known. You get to mingle with smart, curious people, all of whom have \$6,000 to spare. But to go to TED, you need more than cash. The conference directors have to deem you interesting enough to merit one of the 1,450 spots. It's the intellectual equivalent of a velvet rope.

As for goods, forget showing off. "If you want to live like a billionaire, buy a \$12,000 bed," says a financial-planner friend of mine. You can't park a mattress in your driveway, but it will last for decades and you can enjoy it every night. **A**

Virginia Postrel is an *Atlantic* contributing editor and the author of *The Substance of Style* (2003).

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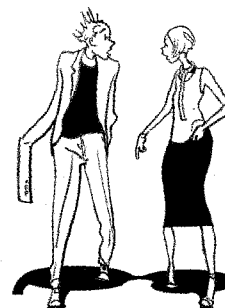
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WORD FUGITIVES

BY BARBARA WALLRAFF



In March, a woman requested a term for her husband's "uncanny ability to ask if I need help with a household task at the exact moment that I am finishing it." Apparently, husbands the world over have this knack. For instance, Kunio Shimane, of Yokoshiba Hikari, Japan, wrote, "Tonight as I was, as usual, reading before supper, I looked up and asked my wife if I could do anything. She said that's exactly what *The Atlantic* wants a word for. I suggest *hind offer*."

A sizable majority of the respondents were men, many of whom cheerfully admitted that the wanted word would apply to them. Stephen Weiland, of Chicago, wrote, "As a chore-avoiding husband, I feel a creative word is unnecessary—I simply describe the situation as *perfect timing*." Robert King, of Indianapolis, wrote, "For this phenomenon, of which I have been guilty, I offer *plausible reliability*." Rob Moore, of Longwood, Fla., wrote, "We husbands consider that an example of excellent *choreography*."

And top honors go to another correspondent from abroad—Laurenz Albe, of Vienna, Austria—for his says-it-all portmanteau word *afterthoughtful*.

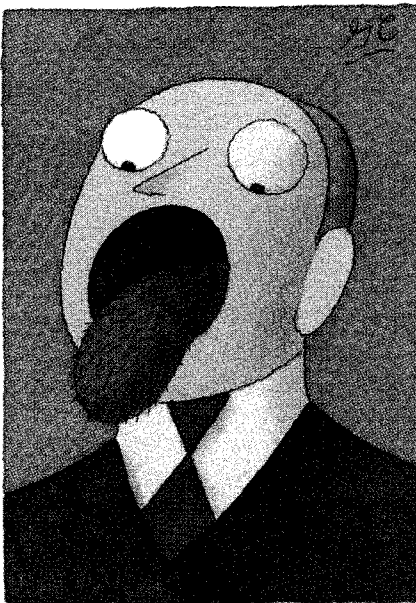
"The unfortunate telling of a story that one realizes too late is ill-suited to the occasion" was the other March fugitive. A reader submitted it on behalf of Dick Cavett, who had wondered in a *New York Times* blog post whether there might be a "precise and economical" expression for this. Therefore, we asked Cavett to award top honors, and he kindly agreed. We gave him these six finalists to choose from:

Iain Mackie, of Vancouver, British Columbia, who wrote, "While my word does not describe the faux pas itself, on

telling such a tale I can only describe myself, after the fact, as feeling *blabber-ghasted*."

Ari Finkelstein, of Astoria, N.Y., who wrote, "Such a story might be referred to as a *lizard tale*, since it gets away from you right as you think you've got a hold on it."

William R. Phillips, of Seattle, who wrote, "We have all told such an embarrassing story and wished we had reined



ourselves in earlier and shut the barn door in time. It is called a *tail of whoa*."

Richard Lanning, of Philadelphia, who wrote, "The situation is one with which I am quite familiar. I am left with the feeling of hair on my tongue, as if I had *put my faux paw in my mouth*."

Tracy J. Priest Jr., of Savannah, Ga., who wrote, "The ill-suited story belongs to the broader category of the *fool pas*. My friend Howard Bowden says the story should be labeled *miscourse*. Should we call the hapless storyteller an *anecdope*?"

And Chris Rooney, of Berkeley, Calif., who wrote, "As long as inappropriate stories have been told, there have been *recanterbury tales*."

Here's Cavett's response: "For me, Richard Lanning comes closest to describing the feeling of being betrayed by one's own mouth in a manner brought on by oneself. I can even identify with the feeling he describes of having a hirsute tongue. Although I'm many years from my Intensive German 101 course (nine times a week!), this seems like one of those things German would have a long word for. Would a German reader accept *Fussimmundeinzufügen? Ja oder nein?*"

Word Fugitives can't answer that—but *Glückwunsch* in any case to Richard Lanning.

Now EILEEN FLUG, of Westport, Conn., writes, "I'm looking for a word for the seemingly universal, irresistible impulse, when faced with a dishwasher that someone else has loaded, to rearrange the dishes."

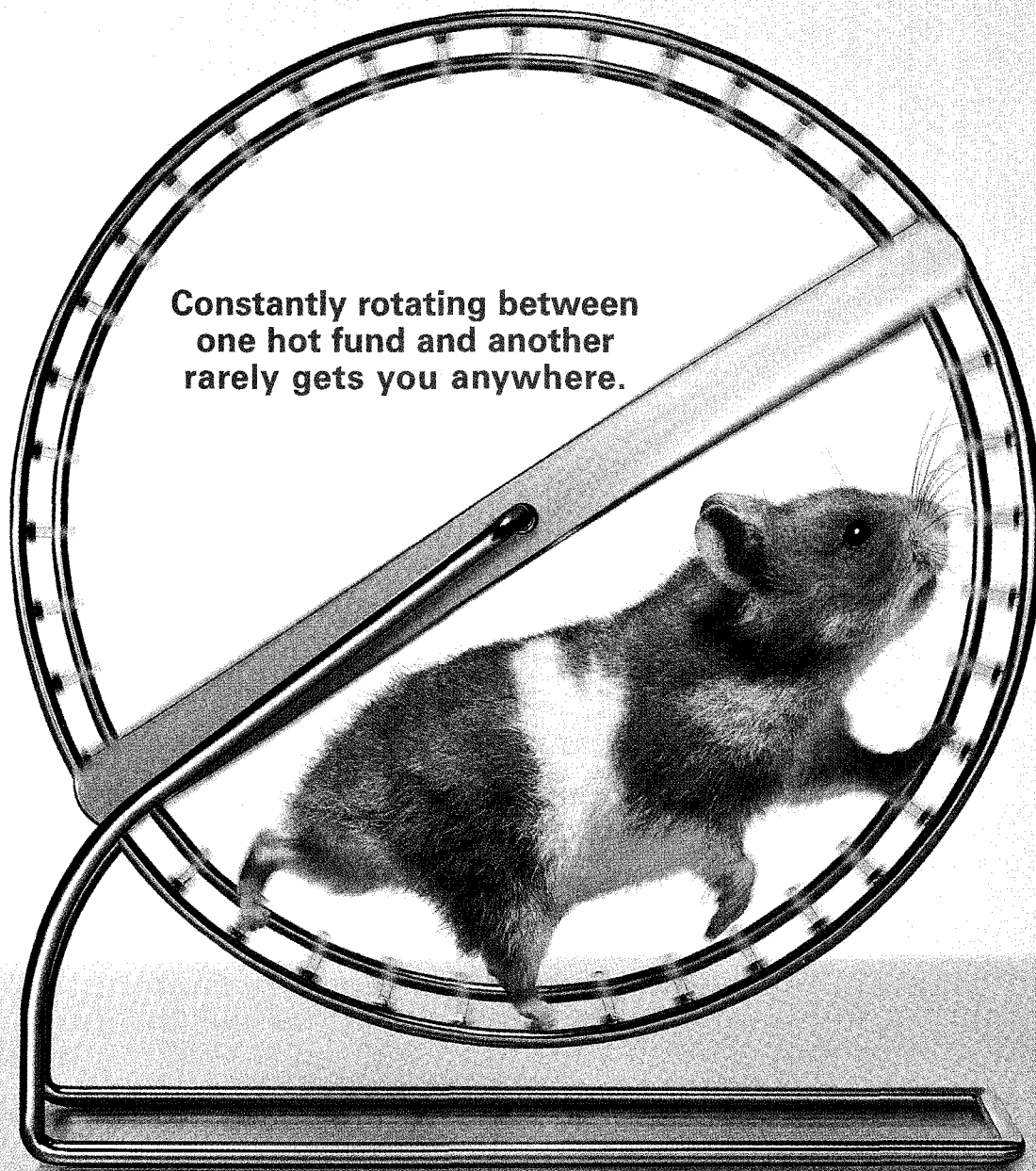
And CURTIS L. BROWN, of Neenah, Wis., writes, "Please help me find an appropriate word for the aversion of many persons (young or old) to revealing their true age."

Send words that meet Eileen Flug's or Curtis Brown's needs to Word Fugitives, The Atlantic, P.O. Box 67375, Chestnut Hill, MA 02467, or visit the Word Fugitives page on our Web site, at www.theatlantic.com/fugitives. Submissions must be received by August 31. Use the same addresses to submit word fugitives that you'd like The Atlantic's help in finding. Letters become the property of Word Fugitives and may be edited.

Readers whose queries are published and those whose words are singled out for top honors will each receive, with our thanks, More Words That Make a Difference, by Robert and Carol Greenman, and my own Word Fugitives.

GREG CLARKE

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